

***Being About the World* - An Analysis of the
Intentionality of Perceptual Experience**

by

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to clarify a general question: ‘What does it mean to say that perceptual experience is intentional?’ and to check whether a certain suspicion is correct: that a major shift has occurred in the views about the intentionality of experience and the strategies of arguing for it.

Intentionality is the property of a mental state to be directed at external objects/states of affairs. No theory of perception denies that perceptual experiences put us in contact with the world; the debate is over *what makes experience have this feature*. There are theories that claim that perceptual experience *is essentially* of external things and there are theories that argue that perceptual experience *becomes* of external things. Sense-data theory, for instance, claims that experience is in the first place a relation to a non-physical entity, a sense-datum. Philosophers who reason along this line believe that experience is unlike thought in one important respect: in experience something is really *presented*. By contrast, theories from the first category argue that the object of experience, like the object of thought, is a mind-independent object, which may exist or not.

The claim that experience is essentially intentional concerns, in the first place, the structure of experience: it says that experience *is not a relation* between awareness and a particular. Experience is of external things without being a relation to them and without being a relation to anything else; it is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects.

At the same time, that experience is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects can be understood as a phenomenological thesis: that I *always* take my experience to be of entities external, independent of me. Introspection, claim intentionalists, backs it up: *I cannot have a perceptual experience without being with me as if I am being presented with something external*. That is to say, the phenomenal character of experience is essentially directed. This is the thesis of intentionalism.

Therefore, there are two ways of saying that experience is intentional: as a claim directed against a certain structure of experience (relational), and as a phenomenological thesis – the phenomenal character of experience is essentially representational. In this dissertation, I analyze how these two claims relate to each other. It is clear that they cannot be equivalent since the phenomenal thesis is directed not only against the sense-data theory but also against the *qualia* view, which *is not* a relational view.

I argue that a major shift has occurred in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience. From using one claim – *the structure of experience is non-relational* – to the other – *all phenomenal features are essentially directed* – the emphasis has been changed from one characteristic of intentionality – *the possible non-existence of the object of experience* – to the other one – *directedness towards object*.

I also argue that this shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience makes it possible that the sense-data theory is compatible with intentionalism.

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1 Introduction

My interest is perception; in particular I want to understand what it means to say that perceptual experience is intentional.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy gives the following definition to intentionality:

“Intentionality is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs.”¹

And this is the definition from *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

Intentionality is the mind’s capacity to direct itself on things. Mental states like thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes (and others) exhibit intentionality in the sense that they are always directed on, or at, something: if you hope, believe or desire, you must hope, believe or desire something. Hope, belief, desire and any other mental state which is directed at something, are known as intentional states.²

Tim Crane, a philosopher who has worked extensively on intentionality, defines it the following way:

The central and defining characteristic of thoughts is that they have objects. The object of a thought is what the thought concerns, or what it is about. Since there cannot be thoughts which are not about anything, or which do not concern anything, there cannot be thoughts without objects. Mental states or events or processes which have objects in this sense are traditionally called ‘intentional,’ and ‘intentionality’ is for this reason the general term for this defining characteristic of thought.³

“The power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things”, “the mind’s capacity to direct itself on things”, “the characteristic of thoughts is that they have objects” – these expressions must be synonymous if everybody understands the same thing by intentionality. Thought is the paradigmatic intentional state; I am going to use

¹ Jacob, Pierre, "Intentionality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/intentionality/>>.

² *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. *Philosophy of Mind*, London and New York: Routledge (1998), p. 240.

³ Crane 2007, p. 474.

“thought” as an umbrella term for various kinds of persistent and episodic mental states: beliefs, desires, intentions, episodes of contemplating, deliberating, considering, etc.

If we want to grasp the concept of *intentionality*, where should we start from? Reflecting on our own thoughts seems like a sensible thing to do. I am thinking now of the annoying wind that started this morning and is disturbing the flowers in the window boxes. The wind is what I am thinking of, so intentionality must be the capacity of my thought of being about the wind.

If intentionality is the feature of having objects, any mental state that has it is called “intentional” and the objects of intentional states are called “intentional objects”. An interesting philosophical question is whether all mental states have objects. Franz Brentano thought that this was the case; the claim that all mental acts have objects is usually labeled “Brentano’s thesis”. It is not clear whether bodily sensations – pains, tickles, etc. – and moods – depression, elation, etc. – have objects, but it is hard to deny that perceptual experiences have. Wind may not be the kind of thing that can be seen, but I can hear it; the object of my auditory experience I am having now is the wind. And I see the flowers in the window-boxes being bent down, and, because of the wind, from time to time I can smell the river. *The more I reflect on my perceptual experiences, the more convinced I become that they all have objects. These objects are things from my environment. Is it not obvious that experience is intentional?*

An important feature of objects of thought is that they may not exist: I can think of flying horses, wish for Santa Claus to make an appearance in his sledge, dread the coming of a nonexistent storm, etc. This is true of perceptual experience too: it is possible to hallucinate pink elephants on the wall, to hear voices in your head, etc. Hallucinations

may be rare, but perceptual illusions are very common. All the time we experience things as having other properties than those they really have; some of the properties I experience things as having simply do not exist. If the possible nonexistence of the object is part of the concept of *intentionality*, perceptual experience satisfies it. *Experiences have objects and sometimes these objects do not exist; doesn't this show that perceptual experience is intentional?*

The favored definition of intentionality nowadays is that it is the property of mental states of representing the world. The way that intentionality defined as directedness towards object relates to intentionality defined as representation is the following: the object of an intentional state is what the intentional state represents and the way the object is represented is the intentional content of the state. Intentional states have intentional objects and intentional contents. Does experience represent the world as being in a certain way? It certainly seems so: while having perceptual experiences I am being aware of things from my environment and they are experienced as being in a certain way. If intentionality is the property of representing the world as being in a certain way, perceptual experience definitely passes the test. Yet, in the contemporary philosophy of perception, “perceptual experience is intentional” is very often used in such a way as if someone needs to be convinced that things are so. But how can there be a debate about it?

A closer look reveals that, indeed, nobody denies that perceptual experience has the feature of being about the world. The debate is actually about *what makes experience have this feature*. Philosophers who use “intentional” in the way mentioned above believe that perceptual experience is *essentially* about the world (or that it is essentially a

representation), in contrast with philosophers who believe that perceptual experience *becomes* about the world (it becomes a representation).

Sense-data theory, for instance, claims that experience is actually a relation to a non-physical entity, a sense-datum. Philosophers who reason along this line point out that experience is unlike thought in one important respect. Experience has sensuous properties which thought lacks and when we reflect upon these properties we are forced to admit that they are real instances, that some particular must instantiate them. In experience, they say, something is really *presented*. On further reflection, this turns out to be an internal (mind-dependent, non-physical) object.

This line of reasoning usually (but not always) takes the form of two arguments, the argument from illusion and the argument from hallucination. They reach the same conclusion: that the immediate objects of experience are not what we take them to be – things from our environment, but non-physical particulars. In this respect, the sense-data theory dwells on the classical empiricist conception of perceptual experience: Locke's *ideas*, as well as Berkeley's, and Hume's *impressions* are mental entities, picture-likes, that one is actually aware of when one takes herself to be aware of mind-independent things such as tables and chairs, houses and trees. They are intermediaries between the subject and the world; they mediate the subject's awareness of the world.

By contrast, the claim that experience is intentional is that if it seems to me that there is a table in the room, then my experience is *of a table* even if there is no table anywhere near me. In such case, the table I see does not exist; it is a mere intentional object. In other words, my experience represents my room as containing a table and this representation is inaccurate. That experience is intentional means that the object of

experience, like the object of thought, is a mind-independent object, which may exist or not.

Now, to say it again, what is under discussion is not whether experience is of (represents) external things. It cannot be denied that this is what sense-data do, too: they represent mind-dependent objects. After all, the sense-data theory also goes by the name of “representative theory”. It says that the object of awareness is a particular and *that* particular represents something external to the conscious subject. The implication is that experience is only indirectly (or mediately) a representation of the world; directly, it is a relation to mind-dependent particular. When contrasted with the sense-data theory, the claim that experience is intentional does not challenge the idea that experience is of the external world; it challenges the claim that it is so only indirectly.

There is also naïve-realism, which claims that experience is direct awareness of external things; apparently, the claim that experience is intentional is also directed against naïve-realism, which is the view that the external world itself is given to us in perception⁴. So, there must be more to the intentionality claim than rejection of sense-data. Sense-data theory and naïve realism have something in common: commitment to the idea that the structure of experience is relational. For naïve realism, the consequence of this commitment is that it cannot account for illusion and hallucination. For the sense-

⁴ The view that experience is intentional opposes *both* sense-data theory and naïve realism, as M.G. Anscombe points out: “In the philosophy of sense-perception there are two opposing positions. One says that what we are immediately aware of in sensation is sense-impressions, called ‘ideas’ by Berkeley and ‘sense-data’ by Russell. The other, taken up nowadays by ‘ordinary language’ philosophy, says that on the contrary we at any rate *see* objects (in the *wide* modern sense which would include *e.g.* shadows) without any such intermediaries. It is usually part of this position to insist that I can’t see (or, perhaps, feel, hear, taste, or smell) something which is not there anymore than I can hit something that is not there. I can only *think* I see (etc.) something if it isn’t there, or only in some extended usage of ‘see’ do I see what isn’t there. [...] I wish to say that both these positions are wrong; that both misunderstand verbs of sense-perception, because these verbs are intentional or essentially have an intentional aspect. The first position misconstrues intentional objects as material objects of perception; the other allows only *material* objects of sensation.” (Anscombe 1965, pp. 64-65)

data theory, the consequence is that it can account for illusion and hallucination, but with a price: the direct objects of experience are mind-dependent.

The intentionality claim can account for non-veridical experience without postulating sense-data by saying that experience is not essentially a presentation (either of a mind-dependent object, or of a mind-independent one). “Perceptual experience is intentional” means that it is a *representation* of things external to it. Thus, when contrasted with sense-data theory and naïve realism, the claim that experience is intentional concerns, in the first place, the structure of experience: it says that experience *is not a relation* between awareness and a particular. Experience is of external things without being a relation to them and without being a relation to anything else; it is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects.

Yet there is another twist to it. That experience is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects is also a phenomenological thesis. If being essentially a representation of mind-independent objects simply means that experience is not a relation to its object, then this is to say that experience is like thought, which is not surprising, given what I have already said: that thought is the paradigm case of intentionality. Yet experience is unlike thought in one important respect: experience has sensuous properties that thought lacks. That is to say, *the phenomenal character of experience is different from that of thought*.

Conscious mental states have a feature called ‘phenomenal character’: it is like something it is to undergo them – it is like something it is to have a toothache, it is like something it is to feel anxious, it is like something it is to think of your mother, it is like something it is to experience visually the cloudless sky. Phenomenal character varies

greatly for each category of mental state. For bodily sensations and moods, it is an essential experiential feature by which the state is instantly recognizable. By contrast, the phenomenal character of thought is far from being an obvious feature; there are still philosophers denying that there is any phenomenology to be associated with thought. Besides, a thought is said to be individuated by what it is of and not by what it feels like to have it. Perceptual experiences have both phenomenal character and intentional features. Like states in the former category, they have very vivid phenomenal character (with features specific to every sensory modality). Like thought, they are about things in the world.

Nowadays, when it is said that experience is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects, this is meant as *a phenomenological thesis*: that I *always* take my experience to be of entities external, independent of me. Introspection, claim intentionalists, backs this up: when I attend to my experience, I am aware of the external objects with which my experience puts me in contact; therefore, the phenomenal character of experience is essentially directed – *I cannot have a perceptual experience without being with me as if I am being presented with something external*.

Obviously, in this case saying that experience is essentially a representation is *not* supposed to make a comparison with thought since the phenomenal character of experience is very different from that of thought. Experiencing red or loud is very different from thinking of red or of loud.

So, there seem to be two ways of saying that experience is intentional: as a claim directed against a certain structure of experience (relational) and as a phenomenological thesis. It is not clear at all clear how these two claims relate to each other; finding it out is

the topic of this dissertation. One thing is clear from the very beginning: they cannot be equivalent since the phenomenal thesis is directed not only against the sense-data theory but also against a view that *is not* relational: the *qualia* view.

Sense-data can be seen as representing the world to the subject, but in themselves they are not supposed to be about anything: a sense-datum “possesses no intrinsic intentionality; that is, though it may suggest to the mind through habit other things ‘beyond’ it, in itself possesses only sensible qualities which do not refer beyond themselves”, says a sense-data theorist⁵. So, if I am presented with certain sensible qualities – colors and shapes – I do not necessarily take them to be *of* some external object. They become so through interpretation. This idea is shared by the *qualia* theory: that experience becomes intentional through interpretation; in itself, experience does not have an object, it possesses only purely qualitative features. Against both, the intentionality claim that is a phenomenological thesis says that experience is *essentially intentional*.

So, that experience is essentially intentional can be said in two ways: as a claim about the structure of experience – *it is a representation of external things*, said against relational views; and as a phenomenological claim – *the phenomenal character of experience is essentially representational*. The existence of the *qualia* view shows that simply by dropping the relational view we do not necessarily end up with an intentionalist theory. Maybe the phenomenological thesis is more restrictive? Maybe the phenomenological thesis entails the non-relational structure of experience but not the other way around?

⁵ Robinson 1994, p. 2.

To me, it is not clear at all that things are so; actually, I do not believe them to be so. If the phenomenological thesis were to entail the non-relational structure, this would mean that if, upon introspection, I decide that all phenomenal features are representational features, then I have to accept that I am not aware of sense-data. And I doubt that this is the case; I doubt that that being aware only of representational features actually shows that I am not aware of sense-data. It is true that, traditionally, sense-data are conceived as not possessing any intrinsic intentionality, yet is there any conceptual incompatibility between something being a sense-datum and its being essentially of something external? I do not think so.

What I want is not that much to defend a theory of intrinsically-directed sense-data; it is rather to argue that a major shift has occurred in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience. From using one claim – *the structure of experience is non-relational* – to the other – *all phenomenal features are essentially directed* – the emphasis has been changed from one characteristic of intentionality – *the possible non-existence of the object of experience* – to the other one – *directedness towards object*. These two characteristics of intentionality, I will say, are independent of each other. Here is what I mean:

Intentional states, like representations, have objects that may not exist. For most philosophers, “intentionality” is synonymous with “representation”. Whoever has the concept of *representation* has the concept of something that points towards something which may not exist. If *o* is a representation of *X*, it follows that *X* may not exist. But is the concept of *intentional state* similarly linked to the idea of the possible non-existence

of the object of the state? It can be said that it is obviously so: we can think of what does not exist, we desire and fear what does not exist, etc.

That is true. But the concept of *aboutness* is a phenomenological one; it is arrived at by reflecting on our own mental states. I know from reflection what it is for a thought or perceptual experience to have objects. I can understand what it is for my thoughts and experiences to have objects by concentrating on them *only*, without taking the world into consideration. The other idea, that these objects may not exist, is arrived at when I also take the world into consideration. It seems to me that first I identify the feature of mental states of having objects and after doing so I am confronted with a dilemma: some of these objects do not exist. And thus the need arises to account for the feature of mental states of having objects that may not exist.

It does not seem to me that the possible nonexistence of the object is in any way suggested to me when I reflect on my mental states only. Therefore, I would say that to have the concept of intentionality is simply to have the notion of *aboutness*, which is arrived at by reflection. The other element, the possible non-existence of the object, is what makes the whole issue of intentionality problematic. It is not by accident that it has been called “the problem of intentionality”.

For one thing, the possible non-existence of the object is not part of Brentano’s concept of intentionality, and he is the philosopher credited for coining the notion. He pointed out that all mental states have objects but was not concerned in the least with the problem of the non-existent objects of mental states.⁶ What I take to be the essence of the

⁶ “Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing) or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although

notion of directedness is this: from the subject's point of view, mental states have objects that *seem to be external things and states of affairs*. In other words, that *there is a world for the subject*.

If so, if *directedness towards object* is a phenomenological notion, then the idea I am going to argue for – that a shift has occurred in the strategy of claiming the intentionality of experience – is significant in the following way: while to argue for the non-relational structure of experience is to argue *against* sense-data, arguing that all phenomenal features are essentially directed *is compatible with* the sense-data theory. It does not seem contradictory to me that someone holding that the objects of experience are mind-dependent could also hold that they are essentially *of* things in the world. No known sense-data theorist would probably do so, but there is nothing contradictory about it. Descartes' ideas, for instance, were intrinsically intentional: "He makes it quite clear that ideas possess what he calls 'objective reality', which means that it is part of their essential nature to have an object – that is, to be *of* something."⁷

I will argue the following:

* Intentionality is (a) *directedness towards an object transcendent to (or independent from) experience*, or *experience has an object which is transcendent to experience*.

(a) entails (b) *experience has an object* and (c) *the object of experience may not exist*.

* For perceptual experience, essential to the notion of directedness towards object is

(a') *the subject S takes her experience to be of an external F*.

(a') entails (b') *the subject S takes her experience to have an object F*.

(a') and (b') are the phenomenological counterparts of (a) and (b).

they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on." (Brentano 1995, p. 88)

⁷ Robinson 1994, p. 11.

* Sense-data theory endorses (b') (insofar as it claims that all experiences *have objects*), and \sim (c): *If something seems (phenomenally F) to S, there really is an F.*

* The "early" intentionality-of-experience claims were directed against the sense-data theory, therefore they were committed to (c): *If something seems (phenomenally F) to S, nothing needs to be F; what seems to be F is a (mere) intentional object.*

* Intentionalism is committed to (a'); it is a phenomenological thesis, therefore it is about how it seems to the subject. It says that the phenomenal character of experience is essentially *of* external things.

* Sense-data theory can be shown compatible with (a') if it can be argued that sense-data are intrinsically directed.

The intentionality-of-experience claims changed from being arguments for (c) to being arguments for (a'); in doing so, they have become compatible with what they were initially directed against.

The structure will be the following: First, in Chapter 1, I will introduce intentionalism, the thesis which expresses the way it is usually understood today the claim that experience is intentional. But intentionalism constitutes just a part of the "story"; if it is to understand better the claim that experience is intentional, I need to go back to what I am going to call "early" intentionality-of-experience claims, which were directed against the relational structure of experience.

Some prerequisites are needed for that and Chapter 2 and 3 will take care of them. Chapter 2 introduces the Phenomenal Principle, which is the main premise in all arguments for sense-data; "early" intentionality-of-experience claims were directed against it. Chapter 3 is about the general notion of intentionality. Its purpose is to show to

which extent what some philosophers nowadays tend to consider unproblematic is far from being so. It is just mistaken to consider intentionality an unproblematic concept. Far from it, its problems run deep today as much as ever.

Chapter 4 deals with the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims.

Chapter 5 deals with the change in the strategies of arguing that experience is intentional: the change has been determined by a new idea – that phenomenal features are essentially intentional – which challenges a traditional way of considering the intentional and the phenomenal as features independent from each other.

Finally, Chapter 6 deals with the main argument for intentionalism, the transparency argument. It takes a closer look, then it makes a case for essentially-directed sense-data. It proposes an argument from introspection which combines the phenomenal principle with the transparency claim. Eccentric as it may be, that there is nothing contradictory or implausible about it

2 Intentionalism

2.1 Intentionality as Possession of Content. Terminology

Nowadays intentionality is most often characterized in terms of *accuracy* / *satisfaction conditions* or *intentional (representational) content*. To characterize mental states in this way is to take into account the fact that they can misrepresent, err, point to what is not there/not the case.

The notion of intentional content is tied up with that of representation/information: that a mental state has content means that it represents the world as being in a certain way, or that it gives information about the world. The conditions of satisfaction of a mental state show what has to be the case for the world to be the way the mental state represents it to be. In the case of belief, they are the conditions under which the belief is true; for perceptual experience – the conditions under which the experience is veridical.

Generally speaking it does not matter much whether one chooses to characterize intentionality in terms of conditions of satisfaction or in terms of intentional content. The two notions are equivalent: the intentional content of a mental state just specifies its conditions of satisfaction. Alternatively, the conditions of satisfaction of a mental state give its intentional content. If I believe that it is raining, the condition that has to be satisfied for my belief to be true, which is also the intentional content of the belief, is that it is raining. Yet one may want to use these expressions more carefully. John Searle, who first used “conditions of satisfaction”, acknowledged that the notion of *content* is broader,

because an intentional content could be propositional or non-propositional, while the notion of conditions of satisfaction are expressible by a proposition. He used “satisfaction conditions” for *propositional content*¹.

It makes no difference if one uses “accuracy conditions” or “satisfactions conditions”. “Accuracy conditions” was coined by Charles Siewert²: people and things are assessable for truth and falsity, accuracy and inaccuracy in virtue of certain features they have: if I believe that there is a cup on my table and actually there is a cup on my table, my belief is true. If it looks to me as if the wall in front of me is yellow and the wall is yellow, my visual experience is accurate (or veridical). The accuracy conditions are those under which the intentional state is true or accurate.

Most philosophers prefer to talk of content instead of satisfaction/accuracy conditions and so will I. It is straightforward how intentionality as directedness towards object translates into possession of content: the object of an intentional state is specified/represented as being in a certain way, or as Elizabeth Anscombe put it, is “given under a description”; the way the object is represented as being is the intentional content of the state. Another way of putting it, which does not involve mentioning the object, is that a content represents that such-and-such is the case. This specification of what is represented is sometimes called aspectual shape (Searle 1983 and Crane 2001)

¹ “[...] every Intentional state consists of an *Intentional content* in a *psychological mode*. Where that content is a whole proposition and where there is a direction of fit, *the Intentional content determines the conditions of satisfaction*. Conditions of satisfaction are those conditions which, as determined by the Intentional content, must obtain if the state is to be satisfied. For this reason, the *specification* of the content is always a *specification* of the conditions of satisfaction.” (Searle 1985, pp. 12-13)

² Siewert 1998.

Beside intentional objects and intentional contents, intentional states have also intentional modes (Crane 2001), or psychological modes (Searle 1983), or manners of representing (Chalmers 2004). “Manner of representing” is particularly suitable, since it captures best the essence of the phenomenon: it determines the manner in which a content is represented: as a belief, as a desire, as a visual experience, as an auditory experience etc. Two states with the same content, for instance that it is raining, can have different intentional modes, therefore they are different intentional states: one is the belief that it is raining, the other is the desire that it would rain.

There are several interesting questions about how to characterize these elements of intentional states. Contents, for example, are usually thought to be propositions, yet, as I already mentioned, some philosophers think that the content of states such as love or hate cannot be propositions. It is also debatable whether the content is conceptual or not.

Nowadays the discussions about the intentionality of experience are mostly framed in terms of possession of content and the dispute is on whether experience has its content essentially or not, that is, whether intentionality is an essential property of perceptual experiences or not. The main players are now intentionalism and the *qualia* view; most of the time sense-data theory is absent from the debate, a fact that has not gone unnoticed³.

Perceptual experiences have both intentional content and phenomenal character. The question is what the relation between these two features is. *Qualia* philosophers believe

³ “There is a radical difference in contemporary philosophers’ attitude to *qualia* and their attitude to sense-data. Contemporary philosophers are fairly unanimous in their rejection of sense-data. The idea that experience is not awareness of non-physical objects is thought to be an out-dated product of a discredited epistemology and philosophy of mind. But it is perhaps equally clear that there are as many contemporary philosophers who accept the existence of *qualia* as there are those who reject sense-data. Sense-data are the product of confusion; *qualia*, on the other hand, are troublesome but undeniable features of our experience of which we have to give a physicalist or naturalist account.” (Crane 2000, p. 181)

that they are independent from each other. The opposing view, Intentionalism (or Representationalism), is that there is a strong dependency between them: phenomenal character is essentially directed. Intentionalism is one and the same with what I have characterized as the view that perceptual experience is *essentially* intentional. There are several ways of being an intentionalist and only one is compatible with the sense-data theory; this chapter will review them all.

First, a few points about terminology:

i) since “representationalism” has also been used for a particular (the strongest) form of intentionalism, I will use “intentionalism” for the general thesis and “representationalism” for its strongest form.

ii) I will use “representational property” the way David Chalmers (2004) does: a representational property is the property of having a certain intentional content. I will use “representational property” and “intentional content” interchangeably. I introduce “intentional feature” to denote either the intentional content or the intentional mode.

iii) There are philosophers who associate intentionalism with the view that the intentional content is propositional⁴. I will be neutral on this, since it is not essential to intentionalism that the content is propositional. Another question is whether the content is conceptual or non-conceptual, say, scenario-like or map-like; I will not address this question either.

iv) The phenomenal character of an experience *e* is the way it is like for the subject *S* to undergo *e*. That is, there is a *P* such that *e* is *P* for *S*. “*P*” is a predicate that ranges over properties such as *painful*, *pleasurable*, *uncomfortable*, etc., and over properties that can only be demonstrated: “like this” is used when *S* is asked to describe what it’s like to see

⁴ Byrne 2001, Martin 2002 .

blue, what it's like to taste mint, what it's like to see a red sphere on a white wall, what it's like to see the bishop walking out of the church. I would say that both bodily sensations, moods and very complex conscious episodes, such as shooting someone⁵, have among their phenomenal characters properties such as *painful-ness*, *pleasurable-ness*, *uncomfortable-ness*, *strange-ness* and also properties that can only be demonstrated.

Actually, I think that in the case of perceptual experiences properties such as pleasurable-ness and painful-ness are second-order phenomenal characters, or properties of phenomenal characters. If, for instance, on a bright summer day someone takes me blindfolded to Guincho, on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean, and suddenly takes the blind off and exposes me to the immense expanse of deep blue in all its glorious beauty, I would certainly say that my visual experience is pleasurable, enjoyable, exhilarating, yet I would say that these adjectives apply to the phenomenal character of experience, to what it's like to see that blue (*like this-ness*), than that they are themselves phenomenal characters.

As it obvious by now, I am talking about phenomenal character in the plural, this meaning that I consider a conscious mental state to have several phenomenal characters⁶. Experiences have a mereological structure: the experience that I undergo at this very moment has many experiences as its parts: the visual experience of the screen of my

⁵ B. Hellie gives the following example: "Helen: 'what was your experience of shooting Whittington like for you?' Dick: 'strange and uncomfortable'." Dick picks up strange-and-uncomfortable-ness as the phenomenal character of his experience. (Hellie 2007, p. 262.)

⁶ I am following several philosophers, such as Chalmers 2004 and Hellie 2007. Benj Hellie, for instance, points out: "I have been speaking of *a* phenomenal character of an experience, and *parts or aspects* of what the experience is like for its subject. Undoubtedly the totality of what any experience is like for its subject is tremendously complex, and no linguistic performance ever gives this totality in explicit full detail (though perhaps 'exactly like this' could capture all that detail nonexplicitly). If there is such a thing as *the* phenomenal character of an experience, it would be such a total extremely complex property. I count parts or aspects or determinables of this property as among the many phenomenal characters of an experience." (Hellie 2007, p. 262.)

laptop & the visual experience the cups on the table & the visual experience of the papers spread around, &, ..., & (I can go on like this for a while), & the auditory experience the engine of a car & the auditory experience of the neighbor's dog barking & the auditory experience of children laughing, &, ..., &,....the olfactive experience of freshly brewed coffee & the olfactive experience of the stew which someone is cooking, etc., etc. Some of these experiences can be further divided into other experiences, some cannot.

If an experience e has experiences e' and e'' as parts, it makes sense to say that the phenomenal character P of e has the phenomenal characters P' and P'' of e' and e'' as parts. The phenomenal character of the visual experience of a red circle on a white wall has as its parts the phenomenal character of the visual experience of red & the phenomenal character of the visual experience of white. And what can be called an “atomic” experience, that is, an experience which does not seem to have any other experiences as parts, such as the experience of seeing blue, has one “atomic” phenomenal character: a *like this-ness*. To undergo such an experience can be pleasurable, calming, relaxing; I would say that these are second-order phenomenal characters.

In any case, for my purposes it is enough to say that, for any perceptual experience e , there is at least one P which is its phenomenal character. A phenomenal character is a phenomenal feature; sometimes I may use “phenomenal feature” instead of “phenomenal character”.

v) “*Qualia*” has been used in several different (and confusing) ways. I use it to denote qualitative intrinsic properties of experience. According to some philosophers, they determine the phenomenal character of experience. Sometimes “*qualia*” is being used as synonymous with “phenomenal character”. Yet I think it is a mistake to conflate the two

notions. Phenomenal character is an *explanans* and “*qualia*” an *explanandum* favored by some philosophers⁷. By all means, it is not the only *explanandum*. Other philosophers explain phenomenal character in some other ways, for instance in terms of intentional properties. In doing so, the latter deny the existence of *qualia*. So, for instance, when Fred Dretske says that “The Representationalist Thesis identifies the qualities of experience – *qualia* – with the properties objects are represented as having⁸” by this he means that the representationalist thesis identifies the phenomenal character of experience with the properties objects are represented as having. That is, he uses “*qualia*” as synonymous for “phenomenal character”, which is the wrong use, according to the terminology I am using. If you deny the existence of qualitative intrinsic properties of experience, you commit yourself to the idea that “*qualia*” is an empty term.

2.2 Intentionalism

Intentionalism is a thesis about the nature of phenomenal character. It analysis the phenomenal character of a mental state in terms of intentionality: *the phenomenal character of a mental state is determined by its intentional features*⁹. When applied to perceptual experience, intentionalism is the general claim that the phenomenal character of experience is determined by its intentional structure. Here is a very good description of what intentionalism is, which captures the frame of mind shared by the philosophers who endorse it:

My approach to the notion of intentionality has at its core the observation that assessments of truth and falsity, accuracy and inaccuracy, are made regarding

⁷ For instance, Block 1996.

⁸ Dretske 1995, p. xiii.

⁹ Crane 2007.

people and things in virtue of certain features they have. So, for instance, if I believe there is a pen in my top desk drawer—if I have that feature—and there is a pen in my top desk drawer, then what I believe is true. And if there is no pen there, then what I believe is false. So, I want to say, I am assessable for truth in virtue of this feature: believing that there is a pen in my top desk drawer. Similarly, if it looks to me as though there is a glob of toothpaste on the faucet—if I have that feature—and there is such a deposit of toothpaste there, the way it looks to me is accurate. But under other conditions—say, if there is nothing protruding on the faucet’s surface, but only a reflection from the shower curtain—the way it looks to me on this occasion is inaccurate. Thus I am assessable for accuracy in virtue of its looking to me a certain way. On my understanding of ‘intentionality,’ it is *sufficient* that someone or something have features in virtue of which he, she, or it is assessable for truth or accuracy in the way illustrated, for that person or thing to have intentional features, to have intentionality¹⁰.

Several forms of intentionalism can be identified. I will follow Tim Crane and David Chalmers¹¹ in using “pure intentionalism” for the view that the phenomenal character of a conscious state is determined by its intentional content, and “impure intentionalism” for the one that the phenomenal character of a conscious state is determined by its entire intentional nature, that is, by both mode/manner and content.

A few more words are needed about mode and the relationship between mode and content in the case of perceptual experience. The content represents the objects of experience as being in a certain way, that is, as having certain properties. Whereas the mode is responsible for representing those properties *in a certain manner*. Impure intentionalists claim that the intentional mode of a perceptual experience makes a contribution to the phenomenal character of experience, such that the phenomenal character of the experience is determined by both the content and the mode¹². The phenomenal character of the visual experience I have now of the cup on my table is

¹⁰ Siewert 1998, p. 12.

¹¹ Chalmers (2004) calls it pure representationalism. I prefer Crane’s terminology (2007), which reserves “representationalism” for the strongest form, which respects the way it was first used by Tye and Dretske.

¹² Crane 2007.

different from the phenomenal character of the tactile experience of the same cup. While pure intentionalism explains this difference in terms of difference of content (one experience represents the cup *as seen* (that is, it represents those properties of the cup to which sight is sensitive), the other represents the cup *as felt* with the hand (that is, it represents those properties of the cup to which touch is sensitive), impure intentionalism claims that the two experiences represent the same content in different manners: one represents the cup *visually*, the other *tactilely*.

Pure intentionalism has a strong version and a weak one. *Strong pure intentionalism*, or *representationalism*, makes an identity claim: *phenomenal character is identical with intentional content*. To put it more formally:

(a) *For every phenomenal character P, there is a representational property, or content, C such that, if an experience e has P, P is identical to C.*

In other words, phenomenal characters are contents of a kind: if something is a phenomenal character, it is a content. The view, defended mainly by Michael Tye (1995, 2000) and Fred Dretske (1995), has elicited a lot of criticism. Among other things, it has been accused of committing a category mistake: phenomenal characters are properties of subjects, whereas contents are abstract entities (Martin 2002, Crane 2007). The way I understand the view does not make it vulnerable to this particular objection: it simply does not see the phenomenal character as a property of experience/conscious subject. It seeks to explain the *what it is like* to undergo an experience, as other theories do, yet without assuming that it is a property instantiated by subjects, as those theories do. On this view, inspecting experiences is like inspecting thoughts, and thoughts presents their

contents transparently; therefore so do experiences. Phenomenal characters are contents of experiences. I will have more to say about it when I will discuss transparency.

Weak pure intentionalism claims that the phenomenal character of experience *supervenies* on its representational content: *there can be no difference in phenomenal character without a difference in content*¹³. More formally:

(b) *For any two possible experiences, e with the phenomenal character P and the content C, and e', with the phenomenal character P' and the content C', if $P \neq P'$, $C \neq C'$.*

Identity entails supervenience, so strong pure intentionalism entails weak pure intentionalism:

(a) \rightarrow (b)

In what follows, most of the time I will use “representationalism” to refer to strong pure intentionalism and “supervenience intentionalism” to refer to weak pure intentionalism. “Pure intentionalism” covers both representationalism and supervenience intentionalism.

Alex Byrne has an argument that any difference detectable in phenomenal character is a difference in content¹⁴. Briefly put it, the argument is the following:

1. If a competent¹⁵ subject *S* has two consecutive experiences *e* and *e**, with different phenomenal characters, *P* and *P**, she will not fail to notice the difference.
2. If *S* notices a difference between *P* and *P**, the way things seem to *S* when she undergoes *e* is different from the way it is with her when she undergoes *e**. That is, the content of *e* is different from the content of *e**.

¹³ This formulation has been used by Byrne (2001), Block (1990), Harman (1990), Tye (1992 and 2000).

¹⁴ Byrne 2001.

¹⁵ That is, the subject does not have any cognitive impairments or shortcomings.

3. Therefore, if two experiences e and e^* differ in phenomenal character, they differ in content.

If now I take my glasses off and everything goes blurry, the phenomenal change which I experience is a change in the content of my visual experience: without my glasses, the world is represented as *blurry*. If blurriness is among the phenomenal features of my experience, blurriness is a property that the world is represented as having¹⁶, contrary to what *qualia* defenders claim (that blurriness is an intrinsic, non-intentional property of experience).

This point is also made by another argument for pure intentionalism (perhaps the most famous), the transparency argument. I will have more to say about it; I am just mentioning it for now. It is an argument from introspection consisting of two claims:

4. Introspection reveals only the external objects of experience and their properties.
5. Introspection does not reveal any intrinsic property of experience.

I will express transparency with

(c) *For every phenomenal feature P, there is a representational property, or content, C, such that, if e has P, e has C.*

(b) and (c) are equivalent; they express the same idea in different approaches.

Byrne's argument concerns two consecutive experiences (any change in the phenomenal character entails a change in content), while transparency focuses on one (occurring) experience (any discernible phenomenal character entails a representational property). (Their equivalence is quite straightforward, I think, so I will not insist on it.)

Impure intentionalism holds the middle ground between *pure intentionalism* and the *qualia* theory: it agrees with the former that all phenomenal features are intentional,

¹⁶ This is the way Tye (2000) accounts for blurriness.

yet concedes to the latter that there are phenomenal features which do not entail any representational properties. The defenders of impure intentionalism, most notoriously Tim Crane, believe that the intentional mode of experience makes a contribution towards the phenomenal character of experience. When I take my glasses off, the world goes blurry not because my experience represents it as being blurry, but because it represents it blurrily, that is, in a blurry manner¹⁷.

The debate over the status of bluriness gives an illustration of the differences between pure intentionalism, impure intentionalism, and *qualia* view:

- My experience represents something red *as blurry* (pure intentionalism)
- My experience represents something red *blurrily* (impure intentionalism)
- My experience *is blurry* and represents something red (*qualia* view)

Impure intentionalism contests the validity of Byrne's argument on the ground that premise (2) describes *the way it is with the subject* only in terms of content¹⁸. Yet, the objection goes, the phenomenal character of experience surpasses the content because it is also a matter of the *way*, or the manner, in which experience represents the content to the subject. The manner, although an intentional property, is not to be assimilated with the content. Impure intentionalism is thus the claim that in introspection I am aware of

¹⁷ Loar (2002) gives a nice description of the manner of representation: "Consider representational paintings that are not photographically realist, e.g. one of Picasso's portrait of Marie Therese Walter. It represents its subject distortedly, if quite gracefully. Marie Therese is captured with rounded swooping lines and bright colors, and fragmentedly – her head, say, has one half in profile and the other half full-face. Doubtless there would be a real three dimensional scene that looks just like this picture. But we do not see the Picasso portrait as representing a Martian [...] The picture does not, at least as I am inclined to see it, represent any object as having that distorted shape. Rather it gets you to see the object in a distorted way [...] The distortedness is not a matter of intentional content but of intentional style, not a matter of *what* is represented but of *how* is represented."

¹⁸ Crane (2007)

more than just representational properties: I am aware of the manner in which experience represents things to me.

For the same reason, impure intentionalism does not endorse transparency. When I turn my gaze in, besides the way my experience represents the world, I am also aware of the manner in which it does it. My point of view is, so to speak imbedded in my experience, argues Tim Crane¹⁹; the transparency argument fails to acknowledge this fact.

I will identify impure intentionalism with

(d) *For every phenomenal character P, there is an intentional feature I, either an intentional content or an intentional mode, such that, if an experience e has P, it has I.*

We have now all varieties of intentionalism captured by 4 statements, (a)-(d): (a) is the strongest and entails (b); (b) is equivalent with (c) and both entail (d), which is the weakest of all. At the most general level, intentionalism is the claim the phenomenal features of perceptual experience are entirely determined by intentional features.

Whether consciousness depends on intentionality or whether they are independent of each other has been discussed extensively²⁰; the debate is still ongoing between intentionalists and *qualia* philosophers. The latter argue that some phenomenal features are not intentional. Both camps agree that intentionality is not dependent on consciousness because of the existence of unconscious intentional states (I retain my belief that a new heat wave is coming even while asleep.)

¹⁹ “For what we are trying to describe when we describe an experience is the subject’s *perspective* on the world, the subject’s *point of view*. A description of the subject’s point of view is not a description of (e.g.) the arrangement of some ‘blank’ or ‘blind’ intrinsic properties; it is a description of a point of view *on something*. Already contained in the idea of how things seem to the subject is the idea of a perspective or point of view on ‘things’. The same is true for the idea of *what it is like* to have an experience. A description of what it is like to experience something visually is inevitably a description of what it is for this *thing* to be experienced. (Crane 2007, p. 21)

²⁰ Byrne 2001, Chalmers 2004, Crane 2007, Dretske 1995, Hellie 2003, Tye 1995, to mention just a few.

These options, however, do not exhaust all possible relations between intentionality and consciousness. The following option has emerged lately (the last decade) and gained increasing support: keep the idea that consciousness and intentionality are inseparable from each other²¹ but reverse the sense of the dependence and say that intentionality depends on /is grounded in consciousness.

This view is based on the intuition that conscious mental states are intentional in virtue of their phenomenal character not the other way around. Conscious states have an intrinsic property which constitutes the most basic kind of intentionality – *phenomenal intentionality*. Conscious mental states are intentional in virtue of their phenomenal character, and unconscious mental states are intentional in virtue of the relations they bear to conscious mental states [cf. Horgan and Tienson 2002, Kriegel (2002, 2003, 2007), Loar 2002, 2003].

The view has been spelled out in a number of ways; I will mention two.

- Horgan and Tienson (2002) expressed it as the conjunction of three claims:

(I) *The Intentionality of Phenomenology*: Conscious mental states of the sort commonly cited as paradigmatically phenomenal (e.g., sensory-experiential states such as color-experiences, itches, and smells) have intentional content that is inseparable from their phenomenal character.

(II) *The Phenomenology of Intentionality*: Mental states of the sort commonly cited as paradigmatically intentional (e.g., cognitive states such as beliefs, and conative states such as desires), when conscious, have phenomenal character that is inseparable from their intentional content.

²¹ They are like two faces of the same coin: “Perceptual experiences are Janus-faced: they point outward to the external world, but they also present a subjective face to their subject and they are like something for the subject.” (McGinn 1991, p. 75)

(III) *Phenomenal Intentionality*: There is a kind of intentionality, pervasive in

human mental life, which is constitutively determined by phenomenology alone²².

The formulation of (I) points towards pure intentionalism and so does the phenomenological description:

You might see, say, a red pen on a nearby table, and a chair with red arms and back a bit behind the table. There is certainly something that the red that you see is like to you. But the red that you see is seen, first, as a property of objects. These objects are seen as located in space relative to your center of visual awareness. And they are experienced as part of a complete three-dimensional scene—not just a pen with table and chair, but a pen, table, and chair in a room with floor, walls, ceiling, and windows. This spatial character is built into the phenomenology of the experience.²³

Yet after describing other kinds of perceptual experiences, the authors also say:

The full-fledged phenomenal character of sensory experience is an extraordinarily rich synthetic unity that involves complex, richly intentional, total phenomenal characters of visual-mode phenomenology, tactile-mode phenomenology, kinesthetic body-control phenomenology, auditory and olfactory phenomenology, and so forth—each of which can be abstracted (more or less) from the total experience to be the focus of attention. This overall phenomenal character is thoroughly and essentially intentional. It is the what-it's-like of being an embodied agent in an ambient environment—in short, the what-it's-like of being in a world.²⁴

Since the mode is mentioned as making a contribution towards the phenomenal character of experience, it turns out that it is impure intentionalism that (I) describes.

I will not say much about (II), since it concerns intentional states such as beliefs and desires, which are beyond the scope of this dissertation. These states have been

²² Horgan and Tienson (2002).

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

traditionally considered to lack phenomenal character. Phenomenal intentionalism, as I will call it, claims the opposite to be the case²⁵.

(III) claims that there is a kind of intentional content, “*phenomenal intentional content*”, “which is determined and constituted *wholly by phenomenology*”²⁶.

(III) has been expressed more formally by Uriah Kriegel:

[...] some mental states have a phenomenal property and an intentional property, such that (i) the relevant intentional property is constituted (realized?) by the phenomenal property and (ii) the relevant phenomenal property is non-relational. More formally:

For some mental states M_1, \dots, M_n , there is a phenomenal property P and an intentional property I , such that for each M_i , (i) M_i is P , (ii) M_i is I , (iii) M_i 's being P constitutes M_i 's being I , and (iv) P is a non-relational property of M_i ”²⁷

So, phenomenal intentionalism is the view that phenomenal character is narrow and grounds intentionality²⁸. Like intentionalism, it says that phenomenal character is essentially intentional, but it also claims that phenomenal intentionality is a primitive feature of conscious states, a basic ‘brick’ on which the intentionality of all mental states (both conscious and non-conscious) depends.

Phenomenal intentionalism too can be developed in “pure” and “impure” versions.

Impure phenomenal intentionalism is

²⁵ “Intentional states have a phenomenal character, and this phenomenal character is precisely the what-it-is-like of experiencing a specific propositional-attitude type vis-a-vis a specific intentional content. Change either the attitude-type (believing, desiring, wondering, hoping, etc.) or the particular intentional content, and the phenomenal character thereby changes too. Eliminate the intentional state, and the phenomenal character is thereby eliminated too. This particular phenomenal character could not be present in experience in the absence of that intentional state itself.” (Horgan and Tienson 2002).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Kriegel 2007, p. 319.

²⁸ “On this view, conscious representations are the only representations that represent in and of themselves, not because they are suitably related to other representations. Non-conscious representations, by contrast, represent only insofar as they are suitably related to conscious representations (namely by whatever relation underlies the ‘derivation’ of derivative intentionality from non-derivative intentionality).” (Kriegel 2007, pp. 317-318.)

(e) *For every phenomenal character P, there is an intentional feature I (either intentional character or intentional mode), such that: if an experience e has P, then e has I and e's having I is constituted by e's having P, and e has P intrinsically. $(P \rightarrow I) \& (I \rightarrow P) \& P$ intrinsic.*

Pure phenomenal intentionalism is

(f) *For every phenomenal character P, there is a representational property, or content, C such that: if an experience e has P, then e has C and e's having C is constituted by e's having P, and e has P intrinsically. $(P \rightarrow C) \& (C \rightarrow P) \& P$ intrinsic.*

By analogy with pure intentionalism, which restricts “intentional feature” to “intentional content”, we can define *pure phenomenal intentionalism* as the thesis that a phenomenal character entails an intentional content and that the content is constituted by the phenomenal character, which is an intrinsic property of experience.

From the passages quoted above it seems that Horgan & Tiensen endorse impure phenomenal intentionalism. Kriegel, on the other hand, invokes transparency as an argument for his view, therefore he is committed to pure phenomenal intentionalism²⁹.

²⁹ “That some phenomenal character is inherently intentional and constitutes an intentional content, is brought out clearly in the following thought experiment. Suppose your brain is hooked up to a machine – call it “the inverter” – that can rewire the visual channels in your brain in such a way that when the operator presses the right button your *qualia* are inverted. Suppose further that, while hooked to the inverter, you are looking at pictures of red apples passing on a monitor for five seconds each. In some cases, after three seconds the operator alters the picture on the monitor into a picture of a green apple. In other cases, after three seconds she presses the button on the inverter, thus inverting your color *qualia*. The point is this: from the first person perspective, you will not be able to tell whether the operator changed the picture on the monitor of inverted your *qualia*. Whether it is the world that changed or your brain, your experience of the change is the same – it is the experience of the world changing. This suggests that your experience is inherently directed at the world, that is inherently intentional.

This fact about visual experience has been appreciated quite often the past couple of decades. It is basically the point often referred to in the relevant literature as the ‘transparency of experience’ (Harman 1990). The idea is that whenever we try to introspect the qualities of our conscious experiences, we manage only to become aware of the properties of what these are experiences *of*. This suggests that the phenomenal character of our conscious experiences is intentional.” (Kriegel 2007, p. 320)

The most general thesis of all six [(a)-(f)], which is entailed by each of them, is (d): *for every phenomenal character P, there an intentional feature I, such that, if e has P, e has I.*

Among the pure intentionalist versions, the most general thesis is

(b) *for every phenomenal character P there is a representational property, or content, C, such that, if e has P, e has C.*

Nowadays, philosophers who claim that perceptual experience is intentional endorse intentionalism in one form or another. Its main adversary is the *qualia* view, which claims that, besides representational properties, experience has also properties that are neither representational nor responsible for the manner/mode of representing.

In Chapter 5 I will take a closer look at *qualia* when I will compare two complementary intuitions that have shaped the debates in the philosophy of perception; they concern the relationship between the phenomenal and the intentional and are illustrated by intentionalism, respectively by the *qualia* view. The latter shares with the sense-data theory the intuition that the phenomenal and the intentional are features independent from each other.

Nowadays hardly anybody talks about the sense-data theory. The reason for this neglect is that the sense-data theory is considered obsolete by many philosophers; sense-data are, so to speak, ‘out of fashion’. If the view had been successfully defeated, once and for all, there would be no need to take it into account anymore. But this is not the case. To my knowledge, no knock-down against the phenomenal principle (the main premise in all the arguments for sense-data) has been produced. There might be plenty of reasons for not endorsing sense-data, but its being shown to be false is not one of them.

Since the sense-data theory is no longer talked about, it is overlooked that the first intentionality claims were directed particularly against it. More generally, the target then was the relational structure of experience. Whereas what I have presented as the main contenders in the philosophy of perception nowadays – intentionalism and the *qualia* view – are non-relational views (this is not entirely accurate; disjunctivism is quite popular too).

The legitimate question that arises is the following: what is the connection between the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims and intentionalism? Is intentionalism a further development, a refinement of those claims? Or is it a different view?

As I said in the introduction, the former put the emphasis on the possible non-existence of the object, whereas the latter is a phenomenological thesis, with the emphasis on the notion of directedness. But directedness can be conceived as a property of sense-data; a version of the sense-data theory can be imagined which satisfies thesis (d). So, at least *prima facie*, it does not seem to me that intentionalism is incompatible with the sense-data theory, as the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims were. An argument for the intentionalist thesis is not necessarily an argument against the phenomenal principle.

This shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience has gone unnoticed. In order to explore the issue, I need to go back to the first intentionality claims about experience. Before that, I need to know against what they were directed. Chapter 2 is a brief overview of the phenomenal principle and its relevance for certain arguments in the philosophy of perception.

In what follows, I will not be concerned with impure intentionalism. I will be interested only in pure intentionalism in whatever form (representationalism, supervenience intentionalism, phenomenal intentionalism). For reasons of brevity, I will use the word “intentionalism”; yet in doing so, I will mean pure intentionalism, which is expressible by thesis (c): *for every phenomenal character P of e, there is a representational property, or content, C, such that, if e has P, it has C.* Or: all phenomenal features of perceptual experiences are essentially directed, or essentially of external things.

3 The Phenomenal Principle

3.1 The Argument from Illusion

The philosophers who first claimed that perceptual experience is intentional were arguing against the sense-data theory. The argument from illusion is probably the most famous argument for the existence of sense-data (or sense-contents, or *sensa*); the argument from hallucination follows it closely. There have been several versions of both arguments. The argument from illusion was formulated for the first time by Hume but became central to the philosophy of perception in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Sense-data are not fashionable nowadays; the sense-data theory is seen as something belonging to the past. Yet even nowadays there are philosophers who think that the arguments from illusion/hallucination are to be taken seriously. A. D. Smith (2002), for instance, is a direct realist who believes that the arguments are not easy to resist. After formulating the argument from illusion and analyzing each premise, he concludes that only one premise can be attacked, then he spends more than half a book carefully constructing a strategy against it. There are several formulations of the argument, but, to my knowledge, none as recent and as rigorously analyzed as Smith's. For these reasons I have decided to present his version¹ of the argument from illusion. The argument is the following:

1. Perceptual illusion can occur.

¹ Smith 2002, Chapter 1, pp. 21-65.

2. Whenever something perceptually appears to have a feature which it actually does not have, we are aware of something that actually possesses that feature.
3. Since the appearing physical object does not possess that feature, it is not the physical object that we are aware of in such situation. We are aware of a sense-datum.
4. Therefore, in no illusory situation are we aware of the physical object.
5. Therefore, in all situations we are immediately aware of sense-data, and only indirectly aware of normal physical objects.

Premise 1 just states a fact. “Illusion” applies to any perceptual situation in which an object is actually perceived, but in which it appears other than it really is, for whatever reasons. That is, the term “illusion” applies not only to situations in which the subject is “fooled”, but to all situations in which the object appears other than it is.

This is undisputed. Any physical feature may appear differently to any sense that could possibly perceive it: the straight stick appears bent in the water, lukewarm water feels warmer to the hand that has previously been immersed in cold water than to the hand that has just been immersed in hot water, sweet wine tastes sour if sipped after tasting honey, etc., etc.

Premise 2 is what Smith, voicing the opinions of all philosophers that took an interest in the argument, considers the ‘heart of the Argument’. It received many names: the “Phenomenal Principle” (Robinson 1994), the “Actualist” thesis (Martin, *ms.*), the “sense-datum inference” (Smith 2002), the “sense-datum fallacy” (Harman 1990). I will treat it separately.

Premise 3 cannot be disputed; it is just the application of Leibniz's Law. At this stage, says Smith, we can see that the scope of the illusion required by the first premise need not be very wide. It does not need to apply to every sense and to *every* perceptible feature of every physical object. All that is required is that *some* perceptual feature of any physical object be subject to illusion for every possible sense by which we might perceive that object. What happens next is a "sense datum infection" and the conclusion that sense-data are the direct objects of awareness cannot be avoided²; 4 and 5 acknowledge this fact.

Step 4 is the conclusion of the previous ones. An attempt to refute 4 was made by the so-called new Realists³: they accepted **Premise 2** (when a tomato looks black to me, I am aware of something black), but denied that awareness is not of a normal physical object and claimed instead that the features of which we are aware in illusion are properties possessed by the physical objects that appear. The attempt is not credible, so I will not spend time on it.

² "For suppose that we see a red tomato that looks black as a result of unusual lighting. We conclude by the second and third steps of the Argument, that we are aware of a black sense-datum distinct from any physical tomato. Now although in this situation the shape of the tomato is not, we may suppose, subject to illusion, we cannot maintain that we are directly visually aware of the tomato's shape, because, simply in virtue of one of the visible features of the tomato being subject to illusion, a sense-datum has replaced the tomato as the object of visual awareness as such. For the shape you see is the shape of *something black*, and the tomato is not black." (Smith 2002, p. 26)

³ T. Percy Nun, quoted by Smith: "To me it seems true, not only that both the warmth and the coldness are really experienced, but also that, under appropriate conditions, both are there to be experienced... I can find no more 'contradiction' in the simultaneous attribution of the warmth and coldness to the same water than the simultaneous attribution to it of warmth and acidity. Only empirical experience can decide what qualities it is possible, and what it is impossible, for a body to wear together, and we must admit that experience shows that warmth and coldness simply are not among the qualities which exclude one another." (Smith 2002, pp. 29-30)

Step 5 is what Smith calls the “generalizing” step and Martin the “spreading” step: in all situations, veridical as well as illusory, we are immediately aware of sense-data and only indirectly aware of normal physical objects. The reason for endorsing 5 is what has been called the “subjective indistinguishability” (Martin, *ms.*) or “phenomenal indiscernability” between veridical and illusory situations – *illusory (or hallucinatory) experiences can be phenomenally indistinguishable from veridical experiences.*

Many philosophers (not just sense-data philosophers but also intentionalists and *qualia* theorists) take phenomenal indiscernability to entail a metaphysical thesis: *illusory and the veridical experiences are of the same metaphysical kind*. Martin calls the latter “the Common Kind Assumption” (CKA) and he argues that it is false. He accepts that an illusory experience can be phenomenally indiscernible from a veridical one but denies that a metaphysical conclusion follows from it. If we are not able to distinguish between two experiences, it does not follow that metaphysically they are of the same kind, argues Martin.

Austin too believed it to be false: “For why on earth should it not be the case that, in some few instances, perceiving one sort of thing is exactly like perceiving another?”⁴ Yet many, like Smith, think that CKA is unavoidable. Smith asks us to reflect on what happens when we look at a piece of clothing under the artificial light of a shop and then discover its real color in daylight:

To deny the generalizing step is to suppose that as you walk out of the shop while looking at you purchase, you only become directly aware of that physical item as you emerge into daylight. Only then does that physical object suddenly leap into

⁴ Austin 1962, p. 52.

our perception in propria persona. Before then you were dealing with a train of mere perceptual proxies, or sense-data.”⁵

The consequence is that the real objects are perceived only now and then, and this is hardly acceptable⁶.

Smith’s evaluation of the argument from illusion is that it can be resisted only by attacking premise 2, that is, the Phenomenal Principle.

Sense-data theory does not have a good reputation nowadays. When stated like this – “perceptual experience is awareness of mental or mind-dependent entities” – it seems hard to believe. But this unlikely conclusion almost inevitably follows if the phenomenal principle is accepted (I say “almost” because one can, like Martin, challenge the Common Kind Assumption). And the truth is, once it is properly understood, the Phenomenal Principle is hard not to take it seriously.

3.2 The Phenomenal Principle

Here there are some formulations of it:

“If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality.”⁷ (Robinson 1994)

“Whenever I truly judge that x appears to me to have the sensible quality q, what happens is that I am directly aware of a certain object y, which (a) really does have the quality q,

⁵ Smith 2002, p. 26.

⁶ “Genuine, direct awareness of the physical world consists, on such a view, of a number of shots of the world taken from ideal positions (in some sense), with any departure from these ideal poses constituting a perceptual loss of the world itself. The picture of our daily commerce with the world through perception that therefore emerges is one of a usually indirect awareness of physical objects occasionally interrupted by direct visions of them glimpsed in favored positions.” (Smith 2002, p. 27)

⁷ Robinson 1994, p. 32.

and (b) stands in some peculiarly intimate relation, yet to be determined, to x.”⁸ (C. D. Broad 1965)

“When I say ‘This table appears brown to me’ it is quite plain that I am acquainted with an actual instance of brownness (or equally plainly with a pair of instances when I see double).” (H. H. Price 1932)

It is not hard to see that it is the piece that could make the puzzle of perception phenomenally coherent. The phenomenology of perceptual experience is such that, upon reflection, it is hard not to accept that we are presented with something, as one of the most famous passages in the philosophy of perception shows:

When I see a tomato there is much that I can doubt. I can doubt whether it is a tomato that I am seeing, and not a cleverly painted piece of wax. I can doubt whether there is any material thing there at all. Perhaps what I took for a tomato was really a reflection; perhaps I am even the victim of some hallucination. One thing however I cannot doubt: that there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape, standing out from a background of other color-patches, and having a certain visual depth, and that this whole field of color is directly present to my consciousness. What the red patch is, whether a substance, or a state of substance, or an event, whether it is physical or psychical or neither, are questions that we may doubt about. But that something is red and round then and there I cannot doubt.⁹

Price’s description says exactly what the problem is: we may doubt most of our beliefs about physical things, we may withhold them, yet it is impossible to doubt that in experience we are presented with something which is colored and has a certain shape.

Unreflectively we may take all visual presentations to be colored surfaces of physical things, all auditory presentations to be sounds emitted by physical things, etc., but we learn very early in life that things may appear differently from the way they are. So, upon reflection, we would not say that all the features that we notice are instantiated

⁸ C. D. Broad, “The Theory of Sensa”, in Swartz 1965, p. 89.

⁹ Price 1932, p. 3.

by things and events in our environment. When we change position and things seem smaller or larger, as we depart from them or come closer, we know that the physical things do not change. As Moore put it,

[...] it seems as if it were unmistakably true that the presented object, about which we make our judgment when we talk of “This surface” at a later time, *is* perceptibly different, from that about which we are making it when we talk of the surface I just saw now. If, at a later time, I am at a sufficiently greater distance from the surface, the presented object which corresponds to it at the time seems to be perceptibly smaller, than the one which corresponded to it before. If I am looking at it from a sufficiently oblique angle, the latter presented object often seems to be perceptibly different in shape – a perceptibly flatter ellipse, for instance. If I am looking at it with blue spectacles on, when formerly I had none, the latter presented object seems to be perceptibly different in color from the earlier one. [...] All this seems to be as plain as it can be, and yet it makes absolutely no difference to the fact that of the surface in question we are *not* prepared to judge that it is perceptibly different from the way it was. [...] It seems, therefore, to be absolutely impossible that the surface seen at the later time should be identical with the object presented then, and the surface seen earlier with the object presented then, for the simple reason that, whereas with regard to the latter seen surface I am not prepared to judge that it is in any way perceptibly different from that seen earlier, it seems that with regard with the later sense-datum I cannot fail to judge that it *is* perceptibly different from the earlier one: the fact that it is perceptibly different simply stares me in the face.¹⁰

Moore’s version of the argument from illusion shows how compelling the phenomenology of experience is: it’s just staring me in the face that *something* has changed. Nobody with enough conceptual sophistication would be tempted to believe that physical things have changed, yet the phenomenology does not leave any place for doubting that *something* did. A further step is to answer what that *something* is.

Thus, there are two stances involved in the phenomenological study perceptual experiences: one which does not take the world into consideration and one which takes the world into consideration. Taking the first stance, that is, concentrating on experience

¹⁰ G. E. Moore, “Some Judgments of Perception”, in Swartz 1965, p. 21.

only, one cannot doubt that something is presented to one's mind.¹¹ Taking the second stance, one realizes that *it* cannot be a physical object from one's environment. There is an undeniable tension between these two stances: "All this seems to be as plain as it can be, and yet it makes absolutely no difference to the fact that of the surface in question we are *not* prepared to judge that it is perceptibly different from the way it was."

The phenomenal principle follows from taking the first stance. If "sense-datum" is used as a technical, neutral term for what is before one's mind when undergoing a perceptual experience¹², the second stance presses towards finding a referent for this term. Mental or mind-dependent particulars are two possible options, which do not exhaust all possibilities. They may be constituents of the brain, as Russell held, or just ordinary physical things from our environment, as the New Realists argued. But

Taking the second stance forces us to realize that the Phenomenal Principle comes at a very high cost: we have to accept that the immediate objects of experience are not the physical things from our environment that we take them to be.

The way I have made the case for the phenomenal principle reflects the strategy of most sense-data philosophers: it proceeds from experience, by bracketing the world and concentrating on atomic phenomenal features (shapes and colors). But it can be done

¹¹ "At any given moment, there are certain things of which a man is 'aware', certain things which are 'before his mind'. Now although it is very difficult to define 'awareness', it is not at all difficult to say that I am aware of such and such things. [...] If I describe these objects, I may of course describe them wrongly; hence I cannot with certainty communicate to another what are the things of which I am aware. But if I speak to myself, and denote them by what may be called 'proper names', rather than by descriptive words, I cannot be in error. So long as the names which I use really are names at the moment, i.e. are naming things to me, so long the things must be objects of which I am aware, since otherwise the words would be meaningless sounds, not names of things." (Russell 1992, p. 7)

¹² Price introduces it the following way: "This peculiar and ultimate manner of being present to consciousness is called *being given*, and that which is thus present is called a *datum*. The corresponding mental attitude is called *acquaintance*, *intuitive apprehension*, or sometimes *having*. Data of this special sort are called *sense-data*." (Price 1932, p. 3)

differently, with the same force, by proceeding from the world and concentrating on the whole scene given at any moment.

A common intuition is that experience is an immediate awareness of things from our environment. This is part of our naïve view of experience; Benj Hellie calls it ‘the doctrine of *Phenomenal Naïvite*’ (Hellie 2006). Suppose that I start by assuming it. Instead of bracketing the world, I work on the assumption that the world itself is given to me in experience, at any moment.

Suppose that I am sitting on a bench in the garden on a windy spring day. In front of me, there is a brown fence; further away there is a tool shed painted pale blue. I’m sitting under one of the cherry trees; there are many other trees and bushes in the garden. It is very windy day and threatening looking clouds alternate rapidly with clear sky and intense sunshine. I concentrate on the scene before me, taken as a whole. I seem to be floating in a sea of very rapidly changing features: colors, shapes and shades. The colors of the things surrounding me – the grass, the cherry flowers, the fence, the tool shed – vary in intensity and saturation, to the point of seeming to be different colors. There are moments when the fence looks grey and the tool shed looks black, and the grass seems dark green; suddenly, after the black cloud has passed, everything looks entirely different under intense, almost blinding sunlight: there are patches of grass which do not look green at all as they shine intensely beyond any recognizable color; the fence looks light brown, while the shed looks almost white – bluish white.

I know what colors all these things have and I know that they do not change. Something else changes: the conditions under which they are seen. Yet knowing that the same things may look differently in different conditions does not change the tension

between the phenomenology of experiencing all these and the idea – on which I keep focusing all along – that *these things do not change*.

From time to time, when the light is “right”, I see them briefly as they really are; then the wind chases again some clouds across the sky and the colors change again. I know that the things around me do not change and I know that I experience their real colors only now and then. And yet, and despite the suddenness and rapid succession of these changes, at no point I experience these colors *as* properties of something else. I experience all these colors as colors of the fence, of the tool shade, of the grass. That is, I experience them as properties of things which actually do not have such properties. They look as vivid as the properties that those things actually have and they look to be *their* properties.

If I did not know about things looking differently under conditions, and if I did not have enough sophistication (such as understanding what counts as real change in a thing and what does not), and a robust sense of reality, I would say that the fence, the tool shed, the grass have different colors at different moments. Or that at every moment I am transported in a different world, with things similar to those in this one but with different colors. The colors that things look to have are experienced as being ‘robust’, as vivid as any of the properties that those things do have; and they are experienced *as* properties of those things. They seem to be instantiated properties; what is more, they seem to be properties instantiated by thing in my garden.

The way I presented things is different from the way a sense-data theorist would. I tried to make the case for the phenomenal principle not by bracketing the world but by using it as a background against which I compared the phenomenology of experiencing

features which the things around me do not have. That is to say, I assumed phenomenal naivite. This is how my experiences strike me as being: as presenting me with things from my garden. Given the strong presentational aspect of the phenomenology, the phenomenological principle presents itself as the most sensible option: I have to admit that *am* presented with actual instances and thus sacrifice the phenomenal naivite involved in this approach. Although deciding so does not change the way things seem to me: I still seem to be presented with things from my garden.

The other version, which brackets the world, makes the presentational point more forcefully: be it as it may, my actual garden or a hallucination of it, I am presented with actual instances. But even if I take the world into account, the presentational aspect cannot be denied. Balancing it against the knowledge that things from my environment do not change in circumstances like those described above, I have two options: to accept that, from time to time I am not presented with real instances, even if phenomenally everything is as if I were. This is, I think, the way to go if you are a disjunctivist. The other option is to drop the phenomenal naivite claim and to accept that I experience something else: sense-data, although this will not change the phenomenology: it is still as if I experience the external world.

The price to pay if I choose the latter – that at no point I experience the world itself – seems very high, yet arguably so is the former: as Smith says, it means to accept that I experience the real things from my garden only from time to time.

The way I have chosen to present the case for the phenomenal principle, by starting from phenomenal naivite, resembles the way the transparency argument – the main phenomenological argument from intentionalism – is usually presented. The stance

adopted by those endorsing transparency is not phenomenal naïveté; it is that I experience *as if* phenomenal naïveté is true. This leads to the conclusion that experience is a representation (not a presentation) of the external world.

It is not by accident that I presented it like that; I did it to show how it could be possible for someone to have both the intuition expressed by the phenomenal principle – *that we are presented with real instances* – and the ‘transparentist’ intuition – *that it is with me as if the world itself is presents in my experience*. For such a philosopher it would be hard if not impossible to bracket the world. In the last chapter, I will present a similar argument to illustrate how the shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience has turned the sense-data theory into a view compatible with intentionalism. But it is too early to deal with it now.

3.3 The “Language of Appearing” Critique

Although not a sense-data theorist, Smith is among the philosophers who consider that the phenomenal principle is not easy to dismiss because it poses a real challenge. He considers that there are two ways of showing that the phenomenal principle is invalid, “a laborious way and a swift way”: “[...] one way is to present a detailed analysis of perception that involves no sense-data or other perceptual proxies. [...] Another way to dispute the inference is to suggest that it involves some fairly simple mistake; when this mistake is pointed out the whole Argument [from Illusion] collapses.”¹³

Smith rates the claim that experience is intentional as one of the “swift ways”; all such ways have in common the quick dismissal of the phenomenal principle as fallacious

¹³ Smith 2002, p. 34.

inference from “appears” to “is” (some have called it “the sense-datum fallacy”¹⁴). Expressions such as “appear”, “look”, “feel”, it has been said, describe phenomenal variability (the way in which perceptual experience varies independently of the physical things being perceived), yet they do not entail statements about sense-data. This line of arguing has been taken up by philosophers with various views about perception:

- defenders of the “theory of appearing” who argued that things appearing differently under different conditions is a matter of certain relations obtaining between conscious subjects and their environments¹⁵;
- “ordinary language” philosophers who claimed that the sense-data inference rests on certain mistakes about the ordinary use of expressions and that once we expose the mistake, it becomes obvious that the inference is unwarranted¹⁶;
- intentionalists, who argued that “seem”, “appear”, “look” are intentional idioms, like “believe”, “think”, “desire”, and should be analyzed in similar fashion.

Only the latter concern my topic. What does it mean to say that perceptual experience is intentional and how does it dispose of the phenomenal principle? Before considering these questions, I need to address the more general issue of intentionality. Is it a straightforward concept, as we may be tempted to think

¹⁴ Harman 1990.

¹⁵ Here is one way of expressing it: “[...] the experienced world is *at once* in some of its major features dependent on and conditioned by the special relations in which sentient (and more particular human) organisms stand to their environment *and also* a direct presentation of that environment itself, or the order of natural events as it is under such conditions.” (A. E. Murphy, in Schilpp 1952, p. 219).

¹⁶ On everyday basis we know that sometimes things look different than they are, we don’t expect them to look as they are all the time, and the language just accommodates this fact. For one thing, careful analysis of language shows that we do not use words such as “appear red”, “look red”, “seem red” as if they mean exactly the same; we use each of them in a certain type of situation. For another thing, all of them are usually used to show that we know or believe that these objects are not actually red, or to withhold the belief that they are red. This is the line of argument of *Sense and Sensibilia*. J. L. Austin’s attack is among the most famous if not the most famous (and also the most unfair) attack against the phenomenal principle.

4 The Concept of Intentionality

Intentionality is a vast topic. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to do a thorough analysis of it, one that would comprise a detailed history of the concept, the way it developed, all the contemporary theories about intentionality and the arguments for them, all the purposes for which these theories were devised. What I want is to shed some light on the topic of intentionality of perceptual experience: what philosophers mean when they say that perceptual experience is intentional. In order to do this I do need to know what intentionality is and what kind of problems the concept raises because they will bear upon experience too.

The chapter is divided into 3 subchapters: the first one looks into Brentano's real influence on the contemporary concept of intentionality, the second is an overview of Brentano's influences, whereas the third contains the analysis of the contemporary concept.

That thoughts can have objects which do not exist started to bother philosophers very early. How to account for the ability to think of non-existents is an ancient puzzle, which has the form of an inconsistent triad known as 'the problem of intentionality':

- (1) Thought is a relation to its object.
- (2) Some thoughts are about things that don't exist.
- (3) Both *relata* of a relation must exist.

Various types of solutions have been suggested:

- deny (1) and say that thoughts about the non-existents are not relations (a);
- deny (2) and say that thoughts about the non-existents are actually relations to mental entities (b);
- deny (3) and say that there are non-existent objects to which thinkers can be related (c).

Each solution can lead to a theory of intentionality, that. We have here an *explanandum* – the characteristic of mental states of having objects that sometimes do not exist – and three possible *explanans*, three different ways of accounting for the *explanandum*:

(a) intentionality is not a relation; (b) intentionality is a relation to a special categories of existent entities; (c) intentionality is a special type of relation (to non-existent entities).

Nowadays (a) is the orthodox view about intentionality. Philosophers such as Twardowski and Husserl (Brentano's disciples) and later on Elisabeth M. Anscombe (1965) and R. M. Chisholm (1957, 1961) argued for (a) against solutions of type (b) and (c).

When I think of something which does exist, they said, for instance, the mayor of Budapest, my thought is directed to the mayor of Budapest and not to something in my mind. That is to say, the object is *transcendent* to the state directed at it. Similarly, when I think of a unicorn, my thought is not directed towards something in my mind, like a mental image (although there usually is a mental image that goes with the thought), but to a unicorn, although there is no such thing. A unicorn is a mere intentional object, that is to say, no thing at all. But, if anything, this was *not* Brentano's view.

4.1 Brentano's True Legacy

The name of one philosopher is more associated with the concept of *intentionality* than of any others. There is a widespread tendency among contemporary analytic philosophers to credit Franz Brentano with the reviving of an old philosophical problem giving it a new lease of life in contemporary philosophy. One of his early books, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, contains a passage which is among the most famous, most quoted and (according to some) most misinterpreted passage in the whole philosophical literature about intentionality:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing) or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.

This intentional inexistence is exclusively characteristic of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon manifests anything similar. Consequently, we can define mental phenomena by saying that they are such phenomena as include an object intentionally within themselves." (Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Vol. I, Book II, Ch. 1)

If everything that has been written about Brentano were true, we would have to believe that he is responsible for coining the contemporary concept of intentionality and for most of the puzzles associated with it. Various things have been attributed to Brentano; I will mention some of them.

- Intentionality is the property of some things to be about other things. Brentano claimed that intentionality is the defining distinction between the mental and the physical (a belief can be about icebergs, but an iceberg is not about anything). All and only mental

phenomena exhibit intentionality. Brentano's thesis is that mental phenomenal cannot be physical phenomena¹.

- On Brentano's account, the object of a mental act is a mind independent thing².

- Brentano viewed beliefs, desires, etc. as relations between people and propositions.

Relations to propositions are irreducibly mental; therefore materialism is false³.

- Brentano was concerned with the problem of how we can think of what does not exist⁴.

¹ "Intentionality is *aboutness*. Some things are about other things: a belief can be about icebergs, but an iceberg is not about anything; an idea can be about the number 7, but the number 7 is not about anything; a book or a film can be about Paris, but Paris is not about anything. Philosophers have long been concerned with the analysis of the phenomenon of intentionality, which has seemed to many to be a fundamental feature of mental states and events.

The term was coined by the Scholastics in the Middle Ages, and derives from the Latin verb *intendo*, meaning to point (at) or aim (at) or extend (toward). Phenomena with intentionality point outside themselves, in effect, to something else: whatever they are *of* or *about*. The term was revived in the 19th century by the philosopher and psychologist Franz Brentano, one of the most important predecessors of the school of Phenomenology. Brentano claimed that intentionality is the defining distinction between the mental and the physical; all and only mental phenomena exhibit intentionality. Since intentionality is, he claimed, an irreducible feature of mental phenomena, and since no physical phenomena could exhibit it, mental phenomena could not be a species of physical phenomena. This claim, often called the Brentano Thesis, or Brentano's Irreducibility Thesis, has often been cited to support the view that the mind cannot be the brain, but this is by no means generally accepted today. (Daniel C. Dennett and John Haugeland, the *Intentionality* entry, in Gregory 1987, p. 383)

² "The object of a mental act is on the Brentanian account "external in the full sense of being part of the objective world independent of the subject, rather than a constituent of his consciousness" (M. Dummett 1988 in the original (German) version of the *Origins of the Analytic Philosophy*, cited in Smith 1995, p. 40).

³ "The [...] problem, raised by Brentano, is the problem of *intentionality*. Many mental properties – believing, desiring, and so forth – appear to be *relational* properties: more precisely, they appear to relate people to non-linguistic entities called *propositions*. So any materialist who takes believing and desiring at face value – any materialist who admits that belief and desire *are* relations between people and propositions – any such materialist must show that the relations in question are not irreducibly mental. Brentano felt that this could not be done; and since he saw no alternative to viewing belief and desire as relations to propositions, he concluded that materialism must be false. (Hartry Field, 'Mental Representation', in Stich and Warfield 1994, p. 34.)

⁴ "Brentano was particularly concerned with the problem of how we can represent things that don't exist outside of the mind, such as unicorns. His original idea was that if one thinks about a unicorn, then one's thought has an intentional object that does exist. The object is, not, however, a concrete inhabitant of external reality, but an ephemeral entity, existing in the mind only. [...] Brentano held that the objects of thought and experience were always such intentional entities. Thus if one is thinking about Paris, the

Fairly recently, several analytic commentators (most notably Smith, Mulligan, Crane, Moran, and Bartok) have revealed that neither of these ideas was held by Brentano at the time he wrote the famous passage. They argue that in *Psychology* Brentano:

- did not use the term “intentionality”;
- did not claim that the defining feature of the mental (aboutness) is not possessed by anything physical;
- did not give an account of the objects of mental acts as mind independent objects;
- did not view beliefs, desires, etc. as relations between people and propositions;
- did not think that materialism is false (or that it is true).
- was not concerned with the problem of thinking about the non-existent.

Apparently, between writing *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) and *Descriptive Psychology* (1890), Brentano’s view underwent a radical change. The stance he takes in the latter on the matter of intentionality is similar with that of the contemporary analytic tradition, yet the much discussed passage expresses his earlier view, therefore most attempts to trace the contemporary notion of intentionality back to *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* are unwarranted.

For one thing, Brentano never used the word “intentionality”. For another, the last thing one should look for in the early Brentano is a philosophical *analysis* of the concept of intentionality. His goal was to provide a thorough *description* of mental acts, as required by the a priori study of the mind, or “descriptive psychology”, as he called it.

immediate object of one’s thought is an intentional object rather than a city.” (Gabriel Segal, quoted in Crane 2006-b).

Giving such a description requires introspective study, which shows that all mental acts have objects. Hence the famous claim.

In brief, the “revisionist” findings of the commentators are the following:

a) “Every mental phenomenon includes something like an object within itself” is meant literally. As Brentano himself mentions in the passage, “intentional” belongs to the Scholastic terminology; the scholastics used “*intentio*” for what is before the mind in thought. “Inexistence” is not a mistaken rendition of “non-existence”; it means *in*-existence, that is, existence within. “Intentional inexistence” stands for the way objects of mental acts in-exist in those acts.

b) By “phenomenon”, Brentano does not mean what we do nowadays, that is, “a fact or an event in nature or society” (Oxford English Dictionary). He uses it with the old philosophic sense: *appearance, what appears* (from the Latin *phaenomenon*, Greek *phainomenon*). When he distinguishes between *mental phenomena* and *physical phenomena*, the underlying idea is that *both occur in the mind*. Physical phenomena are:

a color, a figure, a landscape that I see, a chord that I hear, warmth, cold, odor that I sense, as well as similar entities that appear to me in imagination⁵.

Whereas mental phenomena (acts) are:

Hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, feeling warmth or cold ... every judgment, every recollection, every expectation, every inference, every conviction or opinion, every doubt is a mental phenomenon [or act]. Also to be included under this term is every emotion: joy, sorrow, fear, hope, courage,

⁵ PES-E, pp. 79–80.

despair, anger, love, hate, desire, act of will, intention, astonishment, admiration, contempt, etc.”⁶.

The distinction between these two kinds of phenomena is that “every mental phenomenon includes something like an object within itself”, which is not true about physical phenomena. It is also to be noted that on Brentano’s terminology physical phenomena can be the objects of mental acts: color, figure, warmth are the objects of the acts of seeing a colored object, hearing a sound, feeling warmth.

c) The question “How can we think of what does not exist (unicorns, the square circle, etc.)?”, which constitutes the *problem of intentionality* for contemporary analytic philosophy, did not concern Brentano of the *Psychology*⁷. His view is that we only have access to phenomena, or data of consciousness. Physical phenomena are constituted by the (inner) deliverances of the senses (warmth, color, sound, etc.), whereas mental phenomena are presentations, judgments and emotions, which are directed either at physical phenomena (colors, sounds, etc.), or at other mental phenomena. The latter fall into two categories: sensory (acts of perception, but also of memory and of imagination) and intellectual. All these acts have their objects within themselves (in-existent).

d) One could still wonder: what was Brentano’s conception about these objects? They are not mental particulars and they are not abstract entities like properties or mathematical objects. He revived the medieval notion of *intention* and scholastic philosophers

⁶ PES-E, p. 79.

⁷ As Crane points out: “Brentano’s original 1874 doctrine of intentional inexistence *has nothing to do with the problem of how we can think about things that do not exist*. Although his account of intentionality would certainly supply an account of thought about, say, Pegasus, this is only because it is an account of thought *in general*, and not because that was what motivated his account.” (Crane 2006-b)

quarreled a lot over the status of intentions: whether they are modifications of the thinking subject, or entities with a lesser existence, or with no existence at all. Some commentators think that Brentano himself was undecided about it⁸.

Given his early view that all we have access to are phenomena and that the role of psychology is to discover a priori truths about psychological phenomena, the best interpretation is probably that offered by Tim Crane, who follows Peter Simons in calling Brentano's approach "methodological phenomenalism":

[...] according to methodological phenomenalism, science can only study phenomena. Physical phenomena do not exist, in the sense in which their underlying causes exist – they 'should not be considered a reality' – but nor should they be thought of as unreal or non-existent, like Pegasus. From the point of view of consciousness, they are there, given to consciousness and there to be studied, like the mental phenomena whose objects they are. Hence there is no issue, from the perspective of methodological phenomenalism, about 'objects of thought which do not exist'. All objects of thought or presentation are in this way intentionally inexistent in some mental act or other, and this is all that can be studied in psychology. The reality or non-reality of the causes of these phenomena is beyond scientific investigation: psychology as an empirical science can only study the data of consciousness."⁹

The conclusion is that Brentano's early theory of intentionality does not justify the interpretations I mentioned in the first section. Those interpretations are made by contemporary analytic philosophers working under a realist framework and concerned with the problem of intentionality (the inconsistent triad). Neither applies to the "early Brentano".

Later he changed his mind. In the 1911 edition of the *Psychology*, he rejects the immanence thesis: "I am no longer of the opinion that mental relations can have

⁸ Moran: "Brentano's earlier formulations do seem to posit a range of intermediary objects between the mind and external things. Although the early Brentano often speaks of the intentional object as a non-thing (*Nicht-Reales*), or as 'insubstantial' (*unwesenhaft*), he also refers ambiguously to 'some 'internal object-like thing' (*ein innerlich Gegenständliches*), something 'in-dwelling' (*inwohnendes*), mentally immanent (*geistiges inhaben*), which 'need not correspond to anything outside' (DP 24)"

⁹ Crane 2006-b.

something other than a thing as its object.” He admitted the transcendence of the objects of mental acts. His view was now within the “orthodox” approach to intentionality, which means that he had to face the problem of intentionality expressed by the inconsistent triad. According to some commentators, Brentano became an adverbialist¹⁰.

After having reviewed what recent commentators show to be a more appropriate reading of the *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, and before moving to the way the concept of intentionality entered the philosophical scene of the XXth century, it is worth having a closer look at Brentano’s conception of intentional in-existence and some of its influences. In philosophy, few ideas are completely new; most of them are new guises of old and often forgotten views and intentionality is not different. Brentano may not be the “father” of our contemporary concept, yet elements from the traditions that influenced him also influenced contemporary philosophers and some of them resurfaced almost unaltered. A brief survey of Brentano’s sources may help provide a better grasp of the nowadays problems.

4.2 *Intentio*, Intentional Change, Intentional Being

Brentano worked under a philosophical framework quite different from those familiar to us nowadays.¹¹ He proposed a theory of mind, which, he thought, was thoroughly Aristotelian, in both the letter and the spirit of *De Anima*. But he read a good deal of

¹⁰ “Brentano’s mature view is that, in an intentional act, the thinker is modified ‘objectually’, as it were – the mind is modified adverbially. Mental entities do not have some kind of ‘inexistence’, they are modifications of the intending mind. Speaking of mental entities as existing in themselves, for the latter Brentano, is merely a convenient linguistic fiction (PES 388) akin to the manner in which mathematicians effortlessly talk about different kinds of number, e.g., negative or imaginary numbers (PES 386), without any ontological commitment. Brentano in fact combines certain linguistic redescriptions, which dissolve the embarrassing ontological superfluities, with a reist version of a more classical Aristotelian account where thoughts are accidental states of a substance, the thinker.” (Moran 1996, p. 9)

¹¹ This is an opinion shared by several commentators, Moran and Smith among others.

Aristotle through the commentaries of medieval Aristotelians, particularly Thomas Aquinas, and these philosophers interpreted Aristotle in ways suitable to their own philosophical agendas.

Briefly put it, Aristotle's theory of mind is based on a clear-cut division between intellect and the senses. Both belong to the soul, but while the senses need something material in order to function – sense organs – the intellect is immaterial and functions as such. According to Aristotle's immanentism about universals, forms and matter are bound together in individual substances (particulars). Only in the soul forms can exist dematerialized.

Perception is defined as the reception of the form without the matter: it occurs when the form of the perceived object enters the affected sense (vision, hearing, etc.). Aristotle compares it with the wax receiving the seal of a signet ring without the iron or the gold the ring. Aristotelian commentators have a hard time deciding what the right interpretation for this is; the issue is as undecided today as ever. The medieval philosophers favored a certain type of interpretation, and that interpretation stands at the origin of the idea of intentionality.

Aristotle also talks about a sub-product of perception – imagination, or *phantasia* – which is responsible for misperception, dreams, and recollections by setting up an image (*phantasm*) in the sense, which travels through the blood to the central organ, the heart, where it is either activated or stored. *Phantasia* also enables thinking because “the soul *never* thinks without an image”, according to Aristotle. Thought is the reception of intelligible forms, as the senses constitute the reception of sensible forms. Thought and perception are connected to each other and the former cannot occur without the latter: the

intellect extracts the intelligible forms (abstract ideas) from the images, or *phantasms*, (which are concrete particulars) that perception sets up an image in the sense¹².

According to some commentators (Barry Smith 1995, Burnyeats in Nusbaum 1992), Brentano interpreted “reception of the form without the matter” as meaning that the sensible form enters the sense in a completely immaterial way – without the matter of the perceived object and without being instantiated by the matter of the sense-organ. He followed Aquinas in this, who, in Avicenna’s vein, interpreted the change that occurs in perception as a *spiritual* or *intentional* one. By contrast with common change, in which one form takes the place of another by being instantiated in the matter of the thing that undergoes the change, spiritual (intentional) change involves no real alteration (of matter) but an actualization of a form which already existed there in potency.

Undoubtedly, Aristotle’s view is that thinking is this kind of change. But Aquinas puts perception too in this category (although he insists that something material is still needed in the case of perception: the sense-organs) and it is controversial that this is actually Aristotle’s view. The spiritualist interpretation predominates in the Middle Ages (Sorabji calls it “the dematerialization of the senses”), so it is not surprising that we find it in Brentano, who interprets Aristotle through Aquinas, although he parts with the medieval philosophers in certain important respects (while claiming all the time to be truly Aristotelian in spirit).

¹² “An image is a particular mental occurrence, just as much as is a sensation; *thought* first occurs when the mind discerns a point of identity between two or more images. But even when a universal has thus been grasped, it is Aristotle’s doctrine that imagery is still needed by the mind. ‘The soul *never* thinks without an image.’ Just as in geometrical proof, though we make no use of the particular size of the triangle, we draw one of a particular size, so in thought generally, if we are thinking of something non-quantitative, we yet imagine something quantitative, and if our object be something quantitative but indefinite, we imagine it as of a definite quantity. Nothing can be thought of except in connexion with a continuum, and nothing, however timeless, can be thought of except in connexion with time. [...] The use of imagery is the price, Aristotle maintains, which reason has to pay for its association with the lower mental faculties.” (Ross 1995, p. 93)

Intentio is the Latin translation of two Arabic terms, “*ma’na*” and “*ma’qul*”, the former used by Avicenna, the latter by Al-Farabi (who used it as an equivalent for the Greek *noema*)¹³, and it stands for that which is before the mind in thought. The literal meaning of “*intention*” is *stretching*; the idea here is that the mind’s directedness upon its object is analogous with directing an arrow upon a target by stretching the bow. The medieval philosophers distinguish two kinds of intentions: first intentions, that concern things outside the mind, and second intentions, which concern other intentions; “species”, for instance, denotes a second intention.

It is almost impossible to give a short but illuminating account of the term. Sometimes commentators interpret differently the same medieval author; sometimes the same medieval author says different things in different texts. Sometimes medieval authors use the same terminology as their contemporaries/ predecessors but the meanings attached are different. Sometimes they conflate different things under the same terminology.

“*Intentio*” is usually taken to be synonymous with “concept”, as it was a term used by logicians. Nevertheless, it was also used to discuss metaphysics, epistemology, and topics belonging to what we now call philosophy of mind. Avicenna describes *intentio* as a characteristic of the external object that cannot be detected by the senses themselves but gets conveyed by the sensible forms which act upon the senses. His example of *intentio* is that of a sheep which apprehends an intention of the wolf and runs away. The non-sensible characteristic that is thus conveyed is the danger posed by the wolf, its feature of being life-threatening to the sheep. However, if intentions are

¹³ Sorabji 1991.

supposed to be concepts, Avicenna's example is not about a concept; it is rather about the *content* of a concept. Is an intention a concept or the content of the concept? Apparently, throughout the Middle Ages this is never settled one way or the other¹⁴.

The distinction that Avicenna makes in a much quoted passage from *Liber de anima*¹⁵ between forms, which the senses are suited to grasp, and intentions, which the senses cannot detect, is "sabotaged" by another passage, which Sorabji finds more relevant, where shape, color, and position are treated as "intentions" or "material intentions"¹⁶. Another claim that Avicenna makes, that an intention can exist, on its own, in the transmitting medium, adds further confusion to the whole issue.

Some philosophers use "intention" as synonymous with "species"; others insist that the word have different connotations. Roger Bacon claims that "species" is a direct translation of the Aristotelian doctrine of receiving the form without the matter, therefore it is used in relation to the senses, while "*intentio*" stresses that what it applies to is not a real thing. In addition, according to Albert the Great, an intention is a sign or a mark of a real thing, in contrast with a form, which gives being to the thing and is part of it.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Thus an intention is nearly the same as a concept as well as the foundation of the concept's content - one reason why the ontological status of intentions was ambivalent from the beginning." (Christian Knudsen, "Intentions and Impositions", in Kretzman et. al. 1982, p. 480).

¹⁵ "Avicenna proposed a distinction that became fundamental between two kinds of sensory objects, forms and intentions (*Liber de anima* I 5 [115] 86). In general, a form is the kind of sense object that the five external senses are suited to grasp: color, size, shape, sound, and so forth. An *intention* is a characteristic of the object that gets conveyed by the object's form but that cannot be detected by the five senses themselves." (Robert Pasnau, 'Cognition', in McGrade 2003, p. 215.)

¹⁶ Sorabji writes: "He [Avicenna] gives the name 'intention', sometimes 'material intention', to shape, color, position, how much, of what quality, and where (Text 14). These passages are more relevant than the better-known one where he suggests that we should speak of form, rather than intention, as being apprehended in sense-perception. According to this better-known account, the context in which to speak of a sheep as apprehending its *intention* of the wolf is when its mind apprehends something about the wolf which that is *not* in any way apprehended by the senses, such as why it ought to be afraid of the wolf and run away. But our passages connect intentions with sense-perception." (Sorabji 1991, p. 237)

¹⁷ Sorabji 1991, about both Bacon and Albert.

Two or three characteristics of *intentions* were much discussed and argued for and against; some of them echo disputes in the contemporary debate about intentionality. For instance, according to one view, an *intention* (or form) is what directs the thought, i.e. what we think *with*, not what we think *of*. According to Aquinas, a form that exists intentionally in the act of thinking has a double aspect. Under one aspect, it exists in the knower *qua* accident, without being itself an object of a mental act (although it can be the object of a second order act). Under another aspect, it is the form of the thing known; that which directs the mental act towards the object. Therefore, the intentional reception of the form seems is constituted by a modification of the thinking subject; the view is similar to Chisholm's adverbialism and to some versions of phenomenal intentionalism (Uriah Kriegel's).

According to another view, the form's existence in the mind is only *objective* existence, as Ockham called it in an early view, which he later discarded. Objective existence is a non-real mode of existence shared by all objects of thought. Ockham postulated it in an attempt to solve the problem of thinking about what does not exist. This view is different from Aquinas' on two accounts: it claims that *intentio* has no real existence in the mind (as opposed to its existing *qua* accident in the subject) and that the *intentio* is what the subject thinks *of* (as opposed to what the subject thinks *with*). One and the same particular can have both real and objective existence, which does not mean that the objectively existent entity mediates between the knower and the external and real particular since objective existence is not real existence. Postulating non-real existence is the price paid for maintaining direct knowledge of existent particulars and, at the same time, explaining the possibility of thinking about chimeras, abstract objects and non-

actualized possibilities. This is the view that Chisholm seems to have attributed to Brentano, as it will become apparent in the next section.

Subsequently, Ockham abandoned the view and decided that mental acts just have the property of being directed¹⁸. He did so under the criticism of a contemporary [Chatton] who argued that “in order for us to think of a chimera or a golden mountain, it is not necessary that any existent entity *be* a chimera or a golden mountain; it is enough if some real thing has the property of being-of-a-chimera or being-of-a-golden-mountain.”¹⁹ This sounds very familiar to us.

The word “objective” had had a long career before its meaning was radically turned around. It denoted the way in which the thing-as-thought is dependent on the thought about it. It made it into Descartes’ concept of *objective reality*, which applies to ideas, as opposed to *formal reality*, which applies to the external things that are the causes of these ideas. The most important feature of the concept of *object* was that of dependence: an object was not something with independent existence (a thing), but something always depending on something else. It is an *object of....* : object of thought, object of interest, object of attention²⁰. In the contemporary debate, the notion has reappeared in the guise of *intentional object*.

As far as the problem of thinking about the non-existents is concerned, it is also worth mentioning Abelard, whose view parallels Margaret G. Anscombe’s:

Abelard suggests that the whole search for things our ideas are of is misguided. There he compares the question 'What are you thinking of?' with 'What do you want?', in order to note that just as 'I want a hood' does not entail that there is

¹⁸ As Michael Ayers puts it, mental acts have “built-in direction”: “[...] William of Ockham, whose ontology of thought included only real objects and acts of conceiving. The latter are natural signs with built-in direction [...]” (Ayers 1998, p. 1065.)

¹⁹ Marilyn McCord Adams, “Universals in the Early Fourteenth Century”, in Kretzmann et. al. 1982, p. 438.)

²⁰ The point about the change of the meaning of ‘object’ is made by Anscombe, in the beginning of her paper about the intentionality of sensation (Anscombe 1965)

some hood I want, so 'I am thinking of a man' may not entail there is some man I am thinking of. The careful logician, then, can note that some nouns serving as direct objects of verbs of mental attitude are non-denoting, i.e. not logical objects at all. He can then allow that an idea is of something while denying that there is something which it is an idea of.²¹

However, Brentano of the *Psychology* is not concerned at all with any of these. For him, the soul is “windowless”, as one commentator put it²². Brentano intended to give an accurate description of mental acts and what he identified as their fundamental feature was directedness towards objects. It seemed obvious to him that, upon reflection, we should conclude that each and every one of them is directed at something: “In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on.”

On the other hand, he was not concerned with the philosophical puzzle of thinking of what does not exist. It was Chisholm who brought together Brentano’s description of mental acts (they have objects) and the all-time problem of thinking about the non-existent.

4.3 The Concept of Intentionality in Analytic Philosophy

Now I can turn to the contemporary concept of intentionality. There is a tendency among naturalist-minded philosophers to regard it as a neat, clear-cut concept. They equate intentionality with representation, which they subsequently explain in terms of certain

²¹ Martin M. Tweedale, “Abelard and the Culmination of the Old Logic”, in in Kretzmann et. al. 1982, p. 154-155.

²² The formulation belongs to Barry Smith: “Brentano’s intentionality thesis at the time of the *Psychology* may now more properly be interpreted as follows: the mind or soul is windowless; our acts of thought and sensation are directed in every case to what exists immanently within it, i.e. to these acts themselves, or to immanent data of sense, or to immanent entities of other sorts (for example to concepts, the descendants of Aristotle’s forms). (Smith 1995)

natural relations. These theories have problems with accounting for misrepresentation, but many philosophers think that this is mainly a matter of finding the adequate natural relations. Otherwise, representation is believed to be a straightforward notion. Yet, despite its apparent familiarity, representation is a concept full of traps. On closer scrutiny, it seems more plausible that *intentionality* is actually part of the analysis of *representation*, not the other way around.

4.3.1 Chisholm's Interpretation of Brentano

R. M. Chisholm, who edited the first English translation of Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, reintroduced Brentano to the analytic philosophy of the 20th century and his own view on the matter had a great influence on the contemporary concept of intentionality. He coined the word "intentionality" and attributed the concept to Brentano, when actually he should have assumed most of the credits for it. Brentano's description of mental states (that all have objects) inspired Chisholm's idea that the possible non-existence of the object is a genuine feature possessed by all mental states.

"The principal philosophic questions which this concept involves may be formulated by reference to a thesis proposed by Franz Brentano", writes Chisholm²³, referring to what will become known as Brentano's thesis. This is a later conclusion, because earlier he identified two theses in Brentano's famous passage:

This passage contains two different theses: one, an ontological thesis about the nature of certain objects of thought and of other psychological attitudes; the other a psychological thesis, implying that reference to an object is what distinguishes the mental or psychological from the physical²⁴.

²³ Chisholm 1961, p. 168.

²⁴ R. M. Chisholm "Intentionality", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. MacMillan, 1967, p. 201.

Chisholm identified the psychological thesis in the second paragraph of Brentano's passage; he concluded that "according to Brentano's second thesis, intentionality is peculiar to psychological phenomena and thus provides the criterion by means of which the mental may be distinguished from the nonmental"²⁵.

What Chisholm interpreted as an ontological thesis is Brentano's immanentist view; he conjectures that it was meant to explain the possible non-existence of the objects:

Brentano's use of the expression 'intentional inexistence' (he didn't use the term 'intentionality') may also suggest an ontological or metaphysical doctrine concerning the types of being or existence. Did he mean to say that, in order for us to direct our thoughts toward objects that do not exist, such objects must be available to us in at least some kind of 'inexistence'? If he was inclined to accept any such realm of being in 1874, he explicitly rejected it in his later writings. In his later view [...] Brentano repudiated all attempts to show that there *is* anything other than concrete individual things; and he contended that such distinctions as that between 'being' and 'existence' are unintelligible.²⁶

The "Intentionality" entry from the MacMillan *Encyclopedia* shows that, indeed, Chisholm decided that this was the motivation for the "ontological thesis": to provide a solution to the problem of non-existent objects of mental states:

The problem that gave rise to the ontological thesis of intentional inexistence may be suggested by asking what is involved in having thoughts, beliefs, desires, purposes, or other intentional attitudes, which are directed upon objects that do not exist. There is a distinction between a man who is thinking about a unicorn and a man who is thinking about nothing; in the former case, the man is intentionally related to an object, but in the latter case he is not. What, then, is the status of this object? It cannot be an actual unicorn, since there are no unicorns. According to the doctrine of intentional inexistence, the object of the thought about a unicorn *is* a unicorn, but a unicorn with a mode of being (intentional inexistence, immanent objectivity, or existence in the understanding) that is short of actuality but more than nothingness and that, according to most versions of the doctrine, lasts for just the length of time that the unicorn is thought about²⁷.

²⁵ Chisholm, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

²⁶ Chisholm 1961.

²⁷ Chisholm, "Intentionality", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp. 200-201.

Chisholm points out the shortcomings of the idea that the objects of mental acts have a kind of diminished existence within the act: besides things which do not exist, intentional states may also be directed to things that do exist, case in which the in-existent object is made redundant: if the police is looking for a dishonest man, they are not after a mental entity. This is also true about intentional states which have non-existents as objects: if Diogene is looking for an honest man, he is not looking for a mental entity; he is looking for a real honest man, even if such a man may not exist:

He [Brentano] was referring to the fact that they can be truly said to 'have objects' even though the objects which they can be said to have do not in fact exist. Diogene could have looked for an honest man even if there hadn't been any honest man."²⁸

So, first, Chisholm identifies in Brentano an ontological thesis and a psychological one; then he uses the second to dismiss the first: mental acts just have the characteristic of being directed towards objects. No intermediate entities are necessary to explain this feature, nor is it required that the objects have a diminished existence within the act – it is just a feature that only mental acts have. Nothing else enjoys this “freedom”. Mental acts point beyond themselves, to objects transcendent to them. *“Intentional inexistence”* (or better “intentional in-existence”, in order to avoid taking it as synonymous for “intentional non-existence”) *emerges as a name for a mental feature that seems to be a relation without necessarily being so.*

²⁸ Chisholm 1957, p. 169.

At this point, a comment is needed. Some philosophers call this feature “intentional relation”²⁹ and argue that intentional relations differ from ordinary relations not only in that one of the *relata* may be missing. They have other peculiar features: for one thing, if I bump into Clark Kent on the street, then I bump into Superman, whereas if I believe that I bumped into Clark Kent it does not follow that I believe that I bumped into Superman. For another, the tub I sit in is an object with definite specifications (dimensions, color, weight, etc.), whereas the tub I think about need not be specified in any way.

Yet this is misleading; to see why, I will go back to the inconsistent triad which expresses the problem of intentionality:

- (1) Thought is a relation to its object.
- (2) Some thoughts are about things that don’t exist.
- (3) Both *relata* of a relation must exist.

Chisholm rejects (1): it is not the case that all thoughts are relations to their objects, he says; directedness towards object is not always a relation. Now, if we call directedness “intentional relation”, the view can be mistaken for that which rejects (3). The latter is the view that existence and being are different – there are things which do not exist and they can be objects of thought, therefore, it is not true that both *relata* of a relation must exist. This is Meinong’s view, developed nowadays most famously by Edward N. Zalta.

But the idea behind “intentional relation” is *not* a different notion of relation, as (3) requires. It is just the idea that intentionality is not always a relation, despite of

²⁹ For instance, Pierre Jacobi, in the ‘Intentionality’ entry, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

seeming to be so. Talk of “intentional relations” invites confusion, so it is better not to use the expression at all.

Chisholm uses the psychological thesis to formulate a criterion for distinguishing between the mental and the physical.³⁰ He does it by moving the discussion from the level of mental phenomena to that of sentences used to describe mental phenomena, because

these points can be put somehow more precisely by referring to the language we use. We may say that, in our language, the expressions ‘look for’, ‘expects’, and ‘believes’ occur in sentences which are intentional, or used intentionally, whereas ‘sits in’, ‘eats’, and ‘shoots’ do not. We can formulate a working criterion by means of which we can distinguish sentences that are intentional, or are used intentionally, in a certain language from sentences that are not.³¹

He identifies the following criteria:

(e) *failure of existential generalization*: A simple declarative sentence is intentional if it uses a name or a description in such a way that neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies that there is or that there isn’t anything to which the name/description applies.

Ex: “Diogene looked for an honest man”, “They worship Zeus”.

(f) *failure of transfer of truth-functionality*: A non-compound sentence which contains a propositional clause is intentional if neither the sentence nor its contradictory implies

³⁰ “But the objects of these activities need not exist in order to *be* such objects; the things upon which these activities are directed, or to which they refer, need not exist in order thus to be directed upon or referred to. No physical phenomenon, according to Brentano, has this type of freedom; the objects of our physical activities are restricted to what does exist. We can desire or think about horses that don't exist, but we can ride on only those that do.

Brentano's criterion of the psychological or mental might be put in this way: From the fact that a certain thing is the object of an intentional act or attitude, one cannot infer either that that thing exists or that it does not; from the fact that a proposition is the object of an intentional act or attitude, one cannot infer that the proposition is true or that it is false; everything that is psychological involves what is thus intentional; but nothing that is physical can similarly “contain its object intentionally within itself”; intentionality, therefore, may serve as a criterion of the psychological or mental.” (Chisholm 1960 Preface)

³¹ Chisholm 1957, p. 170.

either that the propositional clause is true or that it is false. Ex: “James believes that there are tigers in India” satisfies the criterion, whereas “He succeeded in visiting India” and “He is able to visit India” do not.

(g) *failure of substitutability with coextensive expressions*: A sentence is intentional if its truth value is not preserved when a name/description which it contains is replaced by a name/description with the same denotation.

4.3.2 Intentionality vs. Intensionality

Chisholm’s move from one level of discourse to another – from mental states to sentences about mental states – and his criteria for intentionality opened a new way of looking at intentionality. The criteria by which Chisholm distinguishes sentences that attribute intentional states from sentences that do not are also the criteria for intensionality. In other words, Chisholm makes intensionality the criterion for intentionality.

Intensionality (I will write it with S to make sure it does not get confused with intentionality) is a linguistic feature; it is displayed by sentences and linguistic contexts that fail the test of extensionality. A sentence is extensional iff

(1) The truth-value of a sentence which results from the replacement of any expression contained in the original sentence by an extensionally equivalent expression will not differ from that of the original under any conditions.

(2) The truth-value of the sentence, if it is compound or complex, is a function of the truth values of the simple sentences which make up the compound or complex sentence.

Any sentence which fails to meet at least one of these conditions is *intensional*.

If intentionality is the “mark of the mental” – all and only mental states have the feature of pointing beyond themselves, to objects transcendent to them – it follows that all and only sentences attributing mental states (or, in a wider acceptance, psychological states) are *intensional*. Many philosophers have embraced this idea enthusiastically, while others argued that it is a blind alley.

Chisholm himself acknowledged that failure of existential generalization and failure of substitutability with coextensive terms (or with sentences with the same truth value) are not peculiar to sentences about psychological states: failure of existential generalization applies to “John is thinking about a horse”, but also to statements such as “New Zealand is devoid of unicorns”, “The dam is high enough to prevent any future flood” [Chisholm’s examples]. From the former it cannot be inferred either that there are any unicorns or that there aren’t any; the latter does not entail either that there will be future floods or that there will be not. Both of them are *intensional* and neither attributes a psychological state.

Failure of substitutability applies also to modal sentences: from “It is necessarily true that if Dewey was Truman’s successor, then Dewey was Truman’s successor” it doesn’t follow “It is necessarily true that if Dewey was Truman’s successor, then Dewey was Eisenhower.” [Chisholm’s example too]

Neither is it true that *all* sentences attributing psychological states are *intensional*. “Adrian sees the cat” entails the existence of a cat. “I know that Smith is at home” entails that Smith is at home. “See” and “know” are “success verbs”: they require the existence of what is seen or known. There are more like them: “discover”, “recognize”, “is under

the illusion that”, “hallucinates” (which entail falsity). It can be said, as Dennett did³², that these are not entirely mental or psychological terms; they are partly epistemic or contextual. In addition to its implication regarding the psychological state of the subject, “know” has also the implication that what is known is true. Someone who is not convinced may say that there is no point in insisting on this. Some sentences attributing psychological states are intensional, some are not; maybe this is all that can be said about the relationship between intentionality and intensionality.

Actually, there are philosophers who argued that *all intentional sentences can be treated extensionally*³³. From Lois’ point of view, “Lois believes that Superman is brave” does not entail that “Lois believes that Clark Kent is brave” since she does not know that Superman is one and the same with Clark Kent. However, from a third person’s point of view, Superman and Clark Kent pick up the same individual, and Lois’ psychological state is directed at him. Tim Crane argues³⁴ that the intensionality of sentences about psychological states is an *effect* of their intentionality and not a criterion for it. A broad reconstruction of his argument is the following:

Intentional states have aspectual shape, that is, the content of the state represents the object as being in a certain way. The subject’s point of view is idiosyncratic and this reflects in the aspectual shape of her intentional states³⁵.

³² Dennett has been one of the main advocates of the view: “Raising the level of discussion back up from phenomena to talk about phenomena, from things to sentences, the point is this: Intentional sentences are *intensional* (non-extensional) sentences.” (Dennett 1969, p. 29)

³³ For instance, by Harold Morick, in ‘Intentionality, Intensionality, and the Psychological’, in *Analysis*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Dec. 1971), pp. 39-44. And also by Crane (2001).

³⁴ Crane 2001.

³⁵ “[...] when the aim is to capture the subject’s perspective, whether the belief-report is a good one depends on the way it describes the objects of the belief.” (Crane 2001, p. 21)

The logical properties of intensional contexts depend on the way things (their extensions) are described, whereas the logical properties of extensional contexts are immune to the way their referents are described.

Therefore, those sentences about intentional states that aim at capturing the subject's point of view are intensional. The same situation can be reported objectively (from a third person's point of view), case in which the context is extensional; therefore sentences about the same mental states can be treated extensionally.

Crane's conclusion is that intensionality is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for intentionality³⁶.

4.3.3 What Is Brentano's Thesis?

Given Brentano's early view, it emerged that what Chisholm calls the "psychological thesis" does not distinguish between the mental and the non-mental, as Chisholm believed, but between acts and appearances. Brentano gives a description of mental acts; what he identifies as their fundamental feature is *directedness* towards objects: "In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on."

Thus, if anything deserves to be called "Brentano's thesis" is exactly this: the idea that all mental acts are directed towards objects. From Chisholm onwards the preferred

³⁶ "So the link between intentionality, our subject, and intensionality, the logical concept, is complex. The heart of this link may be expressed as follows: when ascriptions of mental states are intensional, this is a reflection of, or an expression of, their intentionality. The failure of existential generalization is an expression of the fact that the objects of some intentional states do not exist; the failure of substitutivity is an expression of the aspectual shape of intentional states. But not all ascriptions of intentional states are intensional. This is because: (a) some ascriptions of intentional states are not made unless the objects of those states exist; and (b) some ascriptions of intentional states serve purposes other than to capture how things are from the subject's perspective." (Crane 2001, p. 21)

formulation has been that all and only mental acts have this feature. Yet they are different theses and one may subscribe to one but not to the other:

B1) All mental phenomena are intentional (directed towards objects).

B2) All and only mental phenomena are intentional (directed towards objects).

B2) entails B1) and has been regarded as posing a threat to physicalism. B2), it has been argued (most notably by Chisholm and Quine), entails that the intentional idiom cannot be translated into the language of science. This may look like a problem created entirely by Chisholm's choosing intensionality as the criterion for intentionality: the language of science is extensional and intensional sentences have different truth conditions than extensional ones, and hence the translation problem³⁷. Yet, as Dennett points out, this goes well beyond the difficulties posed by the intensionality of sentences attributing psychological states: "no sentence or sentences can be found which adequately reproduce the information of an intentional sentence and still conform to extensional logic"³⁸.

Thus, for the physicalist-minded philosophers, the problem of intentionality is not the inconsistent triad but *prima facie* incompatibility between intentionality and physicalism. The challenge is to find a middle way between giving up on the intentional idiom altogether (as Quine suggested) and accepting that intentionality cannot be accounted for in physicalist terms. That middle way is to naturalize intentionality: to find a theory that gives a naturalistic account of representation and makes psychological states a subclass of representations. Such a theory would be able to give a full account of

³⁷ This is what Crane (2001) suggests: that the problem is a consequence of identifying intentionality with intensionality.

³⁸ Dennett 1969, p. 30.

intentionality, therefore would answer the puzzle of thinking about the non-existent too (the inconsistent triad).

On the other hand, philosophers who are not interested in the compatibility between intentionality and physicalism think that the problem of intentionality is to explain how we can think about the non-existent, that is, the inconsistent triad.

4.3.4 Intentionality as Directedness Towards Object vs. Intentionality as Possession of Content

Many philosophers tend to think that talk about objects of thought invites perplexities regarding the status of these objects, so we would be better off without it. We do not need to characterize intentionality as directedness towards object since we can use possession of content instead. We should simply stop talking about intentional objects and talk only about contents³⁹.

Not everybody thinks this way. Just being a truism that the objects of representations may not exist does not make representation a clearer notion than directedness towards object. Working out a theory of content is not free of difficulties. A theory of content has to specify individuation conditions for the content; the main dispute is whether all contents are narrow (internally determined), or whether all contents are wide (externally determined), or some contents are narrow, some are wide. Every view has its problems. Externalist theories individuate content in virtue of certain external

³⁹ “The point of thinking of propositional attitudes even where no neat sentences of propositional attitude can be produced is that Intentional objects, even under the linguistic interpretation given here, lead almost inexorably to metaphysical excesses.” (Dennett 1969, p. 28) The case he is referring to, that when no neat sentences of propositional attitude can be produced is when the content is not a proposition, as it is the case with intentional states such as love and hate: ‘I love my cat’. Regarding intentional states as propositional attitudes has problems with such mental states. But nowadays few people hold that the content is propositional. It is agreed that mental representation can be non-propositional or even non-conceptual.

relations; they have difficulties with explaining misrepresentation. Besides, it is not all clear that such theories have much to say about mental states. Representations we are familiar with (paintings, signs, etc.) do not represent intrinsically; they get their meaning from conscious agents who interpret them. This does not seem to apply to mental states; it seems plausible to think that they have their meaning intrinsically.

Internalist theories of content do not have a privileged position either. They have problems with explaining in virtue of what the content manages to get satisfied provided that what is represented is something external and the content is internally determined; in other words, the content and its conditions of satisfaction (or what it represents) are cut off from each other. And mixed content views have problems as well.

It may seem that the worrisome idea that our psychological states can be about something which does not exist is explained away when we realize that it is equivalent to the (easier to accept) idea that nothing satisfies the content of some psychological states (or that some psychological states represent what is not the case). Yet someone could argue that we need both the notion of content and the notion of object because the content is a way of representing the object. How are we to distinguish between two contents that represent what is not the case? The contents are different; how to characterize the difference if not in terms of what is represented? A thought about Pegasus and a thought about Santa Claus both lack reference yet are different thoughts. Nothing satisfies their contents, yet they are not about nothing. How else to express the difference if not in terms of one being of Pegasus, the other about Santa Claus?

Maybe the notion of intentional object is not that easy to dispense with.

4.3.5 Intentional Objects

An intentional object is the object of an intentional state; it is what the state is about. A psychological state can be about anything: particular concrete things and events (chairs, trees, rainbows, storms, events of sneezing, waltzing, jumping), abstract entities (numbers, properties), mental entities (thoughts, desires, ideas), entities that exist no more (Hannibal, the Library of Alexandria), entities that never existed (unicorns, Pegasus, Sherlock Holmes), and entities that cannot possibly exist (the square circle). What do all these have in common? The answer is: nothing, except that they can be thought of.

There is nothing that all these have in common; there is no common nature shared by all intentional objects, or no metaphysical category to assign to intentional objects. In other words, “intentional object” does not denote an entity; intentional objects do not belong to a kind. Anscombe argues along these lines⁴⁰. She points out that for the medieval philosophers “object” did not mean “thing” and gives three reasons why “intentional object” should not be taken to mean “thing”. Intentional objects are objects of intentional verbs – “think”, “worship”, “intend” – and have the following features:

- they may not exist;
- they depend on the way they are described: change the description and you change the object⁴¹;

⁴⁰ Anscombe 1965.

⁴¹ Anscombe illustrates the point with an analogy with intentions:

“not any true description of what you do describes it as the action you intended”: ‘Do you mean to be using that pen?’ – ‘Why, what about this pen?’ – ‘It’s Smith’s pen.’ – ‘Oh, Lord, no!’ ”.

You intend to use that pen, but you don’t intend to use Smith’s pen although ‘that pen’ and ‘Smith’s pen’ refer to the same thing. So, both ‘I intend to use that pen’ and ‘I intend to use Smith’s pen’ are true descriptions of what you do, but the first is a description of your intention, whereas the second is not.

- they can be indeterminate: I can think of a man without thinking of a man of any particular height, whereas there is no such thing as a man without any particular height.

No thing can have any of these features, therefore “intentional object” does not designate a thing.

A similar argument that intentional objects are not entities of a certain kind is put forward by Crane: there is no common nature that all objects of thought share; the objects of thought may not exist; the objects of thought can be indeterminate⁴². This shows, he says, that the idea of intentional object is a “schematic idea of an object”, the idea of something playing a certain role, as opposed to a substantial notion of an object, which is that of an object having a certain nature. Another schematic idea of an object is that of a grammatical object, such as direct object:

Transitive verbs are verbs which take objects. This is a claim which we find easy enough to understand when learning grammar; but to understand it we do not need to have a substantial conception of what an object, in this sense, is. All we need to know is that the object is something which plays a certain role in the sentence.”⁴³

This hints at Anscombe’s position, which is stronger and aims to say what intentional objects actually are. She argues not only that intentional objects do not constitute a metaphysical category but also that they actually are grammatical objects: *intentional object* is a grammatical notion.

⁴² “[...] the category of ‘things thought about’ has no chance of being a metaphysically unified category: objects of thought are not just particulars, not just properties, not just events. And the second point I made was that ‘object’ cannot just mean ‘existing entity’, since some intentional objects do not exist. To these two considerations we can add the familiar point that intentional objects can be indeterminate.” (Crane 2001, p. 16)

⁴³ Crane 2001, p. 15.

Her argument is the following:

(4) Intentional objects are a sub-class of direct objects.

(5) A direct object is neither “a bit of language”, nor “what the bit of language stands for”.

(6) Therefore, a direct object is not an entity of any kind.

(7) Therefore, an intentional object is not an entity of any kind. *Intentional object* is a grammatical notion.

Intentional objects are the objects of intentional verbs and intentional verbs are transitive verbs, which require direct objects. Therefore, intentional objects are a subclass of direct objects – this is the argument for (4).

The argument for (5) is the following: When the teacher wants to make the pupils understand the notion of *direct object*, she takes a sentence, say, “John sent Mary a book”, and asks: “What did John send to Mary?”. When getting the answer “A book”, she says: “That’s the direct object.” Now, says Anscombe, the question

“What did John send Mary?” (*)

is equivalent to

“What does the sentence ‘John sent Mary a book’ say John sent Mary?” (**)

which is equivalent to

“What is the direct object of the verb in the sentence?” (***)

The answer to all three of them is “a book”. The question is: is “a book” being mentioned or used? In other words: “is the direct object a bit of language or what the bit of language stands for?”

If the direct object is what the piece of language stands for, a book, then the legitimate question arises: “which book?” The answer is “no book”, because the sentence isn’t considered as true. The sentence is not supposed to be about any particular people; it is used as a heuristic device for learning of the concept of *direct object*. If the direct object is a piece of language, from (*) and (***) it follows that John sent Mary a piece of language.

The argument is not very convincing. H. Robinson (1994) challenges (5) on the ground that it is based on equivocating between objects of verbs and objects of actions. The direct object of a verb is a phrase, as grammarians see it, whereas the direct object of an action is a thing. If we keep the two apart, it is easy to see that questions (*)-(***) are not equivalent: the answer to (*) is “a book” (and the further question “which book?” does not arise particularly because the example is fictitious); the answer to (**) is “It says that John sent Mary a book”, and the answer to (***) is the phrase “a book”.

On this view, direct objects are linguistic entities and the idea of grammatical object is not a schematic idea of an object.

Thus it would seem that 'direct object' has two uses; one grammatical, in which it refers to phrases or clauses, the other in which it refers to things. The former is the more standard use of the term. However, when it comes to elucidating the nature of intentional verbs, then it is useful to draw on the notion of the direct object of an action, for the root of the peculiarity of these verbs does not lie simply in grammar and the phrases that constitute grammatical objects, but in the nature of certain activities which are strange in that they can be performed upon objects that may not exist.⁴⁴

The distinction between objects of verbs and objects of actions shows that the problem of intentional objects goes beyond grammar. “Give” can be used to talk about a verb or it can be used to talk about an action; the same applies to “think”. As verbs, *give* and *talk*

⁴⁴ Robinson 1974, p. 304.

belong to the same category: they are both transitive verbs. In this (grammatical) context, the objects of both are direct objects, so an intentional object in this context *is* a direct object. Whatever can be said about one applies to the other. In this context, an intentional object is a grammatical object.

As actions, *give* and *think* behave differently: the object of the former has to be an existing entity, a thing, the object of the latter does not have this constraint, as reflection on our thoughts reveals. Further reasoning about the objects of mental acts shows that some such objects cannot be entities of any kind. Yet this is something that grammar has nothing to say about.

Crane thinks that both grammatical objects (direct objects, in this case) and intentional objects are objects in the schematic sense, but they are so independently of each other, so one is not to be explained in terms of the other.⁴⁵ The concept of intentional object is needed to differentiate one thought from another. Establishing that the idea of an intentional object is a schematic idea of an object helps dissipate the puzzle that the question “what kind of object is an intentional object?” can create, because it makes it clear that the answer is ‘no kind at all; there is no such kind’. The answer to the question: “what is an intentional object?” is simply: “it is what a thought is of”, and a thought can be of many things: existent particulars, non-existent ones, numbers, properties. When thought about, any of these is an intentional object. Alternatively, we can say “intentional object” is a technical term used to designate a function: that of being the object of a thought.

⁴⁵ “The idea of an intentional object is a phenomenological idea, not a grammatical one. It is an idea which emerges in the process of reflecting on what mental life is like.” (Crane 2001, p. 17.)

If I think about Zeus, Zeus is the object of my thought. Zeus does not exist. At first, there seems to be contradiction if I say ‘Zeus is [the object of my thought]’ and ‘Zeus does not exist’. But it is not so: “being an object of thought” is synonymous with “being an intentional object” and an intentional object is no entity at all. Saying about something that it is an object of thought or an intentional object is not to say that something *is*.

What if I think about Bill Clinton? Bill Clinton *is* real and actually that’s why I can think of him: because he exists. Could I have thought of him if he did not exist? This sounds really weird if not silly. The point of this discussion is to emphasize how intractable the problem of intentionality is. It is not just the question: “How can we think about what does not exist?” but also “How do we think about what exist?” How do our thoughts succeed in picking up their reference? Using the notion of content instead of that of object leaves the problem untouched; we still have to account for the content being what it is and say in virtue of what some contents are satisfied and some are not.

Arguing that “intentional object” does not designate a kind is accepting that the objects of some thoughts do not exist; that is, it is equivalent with the rejection of (1) in the inconsistent triad:

- (1) Thought is a relation to its object.
- (2) Some thoughts are about things that don’t exist.
- (3) Both *relata* of a relation must exist.

To reject (1) is to admit that some thoughts are not relations to their objects. This idea can be developed in either of the following forms:

- (i) Some thoughts *are* relations to their objects;

or

(ii) No thought is a relation to its object.

Commitment to (i) entails that the existence of some thoughts depends on the existence of their objects. In terms of possession of content, it means that the content depends on the existence of the object (that the object itself is part of the content – Russelian content – or that, although not part of the content, the existence of the object is a necessary condition for the content).

(ii) is the view is that even particular thoughts about things which do exist are not relations to their objects. If the same thought can be entertained even in the absence of the object, the existence of the object cannot make any difference. The existence of thought is independent from the existence of the object.

Whatever option is favored and in whatever way (in terms of directedness towards object or of possession of content), the problem that needs to be solved remains the same.

Here is a way of expressing it:

An account of intentionality should be adequate to the following two theses: (I) ‘Mental phenomena can succeed in achieving objective reference’ and (II) ‘Mental phenomena are distinguished by the fact that they may be directed upon objects that do not exist.’ The second thesis is sometimes said to involve ‘the problem of error’ or ‘the problem of presence in absence.’ The first, therefore, might be said to involve ‘the problem of truth’ or ‘the problem of presence in presence.’⁴⁶

4.3.6 Conclusion

The motivation for this overview of the concept of intentionality is two-folded: for one thing, I wanted to point out how mistaken it is to think that claiming that perceptual experience is intentional is an easy way to dispense with the Phenomenal Principle.

⁴⁶ Chisholm 1989, p. 107.

Intentionality is anything but an unproblematic notion, as much so today as ever: Characterizing intentionality in terms of possession of content is not less problematic than characterizing intentionality in terms of directedness towards objects, taking intentionality to be a criterion for intentionality is not convincing. Characterizing intentionality of thought has its problems. Arguing that experience is intentional *is not* making the notion of phenomenal consciousness less puzzling.

Another reason is that I needed to put in perspective Brentano's real contribution to our concept of intentionality. I cannot emphasize it enough: directedness towards object is a phenomenological notion – we arrive at it by reflecting on our own mental states. Some important questions here concern the relation between *directedness towards object* and the status of the object: has the object to be transcendent to the state? Can immanence be accepted?

Maybe these are the wrong questions to ask. I think the following is the case: *if what we acquire from reflection, the phenomenological notion of directedness, is rightly described as there being a world for us, this means that from the first person's perspective the objects the mental states are directed at seem external.* The subject takes her mental states to be of external objects and states of affairs.

If it was Brentano's conviction that psychology, as an empirical science, can only study phenomena (that is, data of consciousness), his stance seems to be the following: science is an activity undertaken by human beings, who are essentially conscious beings. *As there is no standpoint to be taken outside consciousness,* all we can focus on is what consciousness provides us with, things immanent to consciousness. We cannot step out of it and examine the underlying causes of these phenomena. There is a world for us – *all*

these phenomena appear to us to be things and states of affairs external to us – but this world is immanent to consciousness.

Then something radically changed (for Brentano, when he gave up the immanentist view, as well as for us): the idea that *there is no standpoint to be taken outside consciousness*. Analytic philosophy works on the assumption that the standpoint from which science is done is from outside consciousness – it is completely objective and impersonal, a view from nowhere. This means that nowadays we take two stances when it comes to studying the mind. One is the subjective stance, from the first person's perspective. The other is impersonal; it studies the mind as if from outside it. For the early Brentano, only the first stance was possible and his doctrine of immanence was the result of that stance.

When analytic philosophers judge the immanence thesis, they do so by taking the second stance: by pondering mind and the world as from outside both. The immanence thesis seems preposterous *because* it is considered this way (from the second stance). From the second stance, the question whether the objects of mental acts are immanent or transcendent to the acts concerns the things that are “the underlying causes of appearances”. Whereas no such question can be asked from the first stance. That's why the only objects Brentano was concerned about are always the appearances (the only entities he thought accessible). He simply did not think it possible to take another stance.

What we are dealing with is a confusion between stances, or viewpoints. If I try to adopt Brentano's position, it seems to me that my thought can only be directed towards my-house-as-thought-about and not to the real house, which, although the cause of my thought, does not exist inside consciousness. Which is not to say that I take my house to

be an internal, mind-dependent object. I take it to be an object independent of me: I do not think that my house comes into existence only when I think of it and that it become nothingness moments later, when I do not think of it anymore.

From the subject's point of view, mental states have objects that *seem to be external things and states of affairs*. This is what I take to be the essence of the notion of directedness: that *there is a world for the subject*. Externalist theories about content define directedness in terms of external relations, so the way it is with the subject, how things seem from her point of view, does not constitute (real) directedness. For some philosophers, this is an important reason to dismiss externalist theories; a theory of intentionality which does not take into account the subject's point of view lacks something essential: "we want to know not merely what her thoughts represent as it were impersonally, but also how they represent things to *her*."⁴⁷ This has been the main motivation for the apparition of the notion of *phenomenal intentionality*.

When it comes to perceptual experience, the intentionalist claim that phenomenal character is determined by content is supposed to explain why the subject takes the objects of her experience to be external. On externalist accounts, it is this way for the subject the phenomenal character of experience is determined by external relations – the subject's being embedded in the environment whose features her experiences were "designed" (by evolution) to track. There being a world for the perceiving subject is externally fixed; in the absence of the external conditions there is no world for the subject (and probably no subject at all, according to these theories).

⁴⁷ Loar 2002, 2003.

I said that I take the essence of the notion of directedness to be the following: that *there is a world for the subject*. This means that mental states having objects is not enough, by itself, for directedness. The subject has to take them to be external objects. Indeed, I think that the sense-data theory, committed as it is to the idea that perceptual experiences have objects, is not necessarily committed to the idea that perceptual experiences are directed, as long as it insists that the subject may take herself to be presented with something but not necessarily with something external. However, I think that there is nothing to prevent a sense-data theorist from thinking that sense-data are essentially directed.

5 “Early” Intentionality-of-Perceptual-Experience Claims

Intentionalism is the thesis that *every phenomenal feature of an experience entails an intentional (representational) property*, while the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims were that the phenomenal principle is false, that it is not true that whenever I am aware of a sensible quality F, there is something which is F. What is the connection between intentionalism and the early claims? Is intentionalism the successor of those claims, like a further development or refinement? For that, intentionalism would have to be equivalent with their central claim or to entail it. However, as I said, *prima facie*, intentionalism does not seem to be incompatible with sense-data. Something else seems to be the case here if arguing against the phenomenal principle is not equivalent with arguing for intentionalism: a shift occurred in the strategies of arguing for the intentionality of experience.

Now I will turn towards the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims; they are all directed against the phenomenal principle but otherwise differ very much from each other. I will look at four such views.

Nobody denies that perceptual experiences are directed towards objects from the subject’s environment and that some of them may not exist. Sense-data theory acknowledges this fact; the arguments from illusion and hallucination appeared as an explanation to it. Unreflectively, I take myself to be presented with things from my environment; upon reflection, I realize that what I am presented with changes in

circumstances in which the things from my environment cannot possibly change. At the same time, as Moore put it, I cannot doubt that something *did* change. The nature of experience, its phenomenology, is such that the presentational aspect cannot be doubted, according to the sense-data philosophers. If they are right, two things follow: that what is before my mind is not an external thing, and that what is before my mind really exists in any circumstances. Therefore, what is before my mind cannot be an intentional object. Unreflectively I may take it to be something from my environment but reflection shows that it cannot be. Experience is only mediately/indirectly intentional; *the direct object of experience is not an intentional object*.

The views I am going to look at argued that the opposite is the case: *The direct object of experience is an intentional object*. The strategy for defending it has taken various forms: that of arguing that sentences attributing perceptual experiences are intentional; or that the features of some objects of experiences cannot be features of any *thing*, therefore *seem*, *appear*, *look* take intentional objects; or that of giving a naturalist theory of intentionality. And, of course, any combination of the above. I am going to look at four early views that perceptual experience is intentional: those argued for by G. E. M. Anscombe (1965), D. M. Armstrong (1968), G. N. A. Vesey (1965), and R. M. Chisholm (1957).

I will start with Armstrong's.

5.1 A Naturalist Theory of Perception

Someone who is interested in defending materialism can simply concentrate on giving a naturalist theory of intentionality. If successful, it will have a chapter about perception too. This is what Armstrong did in his pioneering *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*.

He has two notorious arguments against sense data. One is the “classical” speckled hen problem¹: we are aware of the hen being speckled without being aware of exactly how many speckles it has. The difficulty it poses to the sense-data theory is that it implies either that the sense-data are indeterminate, or that we have only an indeterminate awareness of them.²

The other argument is that the relation of “exact similarity in a given respect” is non-transitive with regard to sensory items: If A is exactly similar to B in respect X, and B is exactly similar to C in respect X, then A is exactly similar to C in respect X. Still, we can have three samples of cloth, A, B, and C, which differ very slightly in color, in such a way that A and B are perceptually indistinguishable in respect of color, B and C are also perceptually indistinguishable in color, but A and C can be perceptually distinguished in this respect. The paradox for the sense-data theorist, claims Armstrong, is that she has to accept that the sense-data corresponding to A and B are identical in color, and the sense-data corresponding to B and C are identical in color, therefore, the sense-data corresponding to A and C are identical in color, which is false.

However, when it comes to accounting itself for these features, the theory disappoints by not addressing at all the phenomenological issue. Armstrong claims that

¹ “The problem of the speckled hen” started its career as a famous argument against sense-data as a point made to A. J. Ayer by G. Ryle.

² “The theory is now postulating: (i) speckled physical surfaces with perfectly determinate characteristics; (ii) speckled sensory items with perfectly determinate characteristics; (iii) indeterminate awareness of the speckled sensory items. But have not items (ii) become redundant? Why not simply postulate speckled physical surfaces and indeterminate awareness (perception) of those surfaces? It is hard to see that the sensory items are doing any work in the theory.” (Armstrong 1968, p. 221.)

the features of perceptual experiences are actually features of *beliefs* acquired through perceptual experiences. He takes the concept of belief as primitive and gives an account of experience in terms of the acquiring of beliefs about the physical world. The view is that the biological function of perception is to provide information about the current state of the perceiver's body and that of its environment:

If perceptions are acquirings of beliefs, then the correspondence or failure of correspondence of perceptions to physical reality is simply the correspondence or failure of correspondence of beliefs to the facts. *And the intentionality of experience reduces to the intentionality of the beliefs acquired* [my italics].”³

Armstrong does not want to say that perceptions are the acquirings of information about the environments *as the causal result* of the operation of sense-organs; space is left for experiences to arise in some other way (direct simulation of the brain, for instance).

Beliefs are dispositional states; they endure for a greater or lesser length of time and they may or may not manifest themselves (“either in consciousness or in behavior”, p. 214) during that time. Perceptions, though, are events, “that take place at definite instants and are then over”. Are they the events which are acquiring beliefs or events *leading up* to the acquiring of beliefs? If the latter were the case, perception would have to be characterized in some independent way, whereas it seems that Armstrong only wants to say that perceptions are events during which information is acquired, or events consisting in the acquiring of information⁴.

³ Armstrong 1968, p. 211.

⁴ “Up to a certain moment the perceiver has not yet perceived a certain state of affairs, from that moment on he has perceived it. This we interpret as meaning that up to a certain moment the subject has not yet acquired a certain belief, and that after that moment he has acquired it.” (Armstrong 1968, p. 214)

The problematic cases for this view are those in which perceptions occur without the acquiring of true or false beliefs:

a) When we have perceptions that do not correspond to physical reality, but we are not deceived by them, that is, we fail to acquire a false belief (in this case, we have perception without belief).

For instance, something seems red to me, but I do not believe that there is anything red because it happens to know that there is nothing red in my environment. Armstrong's account of the case is the following: when such perceptions occur, there still may be an *inclination to believe*, which is "a belief that is held in check by a stronger belief". And even when no such inclination seems involved, a true counterfactual can be formulated: "But for the fact that the perceiver had other, independent, beliefs about the world, he would have acquired certain beliefs – the belief corresponding to the content of his perception."

Therefore, in cases of "perception without belief" an event occurs in our mind, which can be described as one that would be the acquiring of belief but for the existence of other, contrary beliefs that we already have, which play an inhibitive role. Some inclinations to believe may simply not be strong enough, therefore they remain idle, the way that some desires and wishes may be neither pressures towards action, nor potential pressures towards the action (the same way in which a poison has been ingested, but it is not strong enough to have any effects).

b) When we cannot speak of acquiring of true or false beliefs because we already have those beliefs. If I am looking at a red book, I am certain that it will continue to be red at

the next moment. In this case, we have perception without the acquiring of belief because we already possess that information, therefore the effect is redundant⁵.

5.2 Perceptual Verbs Are Intentional

Anscombe, on the other hand, comes from a completely different school of thought; her interest in dissolving the sense-data “myth” has other motivations than making evident the truth of physicalism⁶. After having argued that intentional objects constitute a subclass of direct objects, therefore they are grammatical features (I have discussed her argument in the previous chapter), she argues that verbs of perception are intentional:

The Berkeleyan sense-datum philosopher makes the same mistake [that is, failing to recognize the intentionality of sensation] in his insistence that, e.g., one sees visual impressions, visual data. I would say that such a philosopher makes such an incorrect inference from the truth of the grammatical statement that the intentional object, the impression, is what you see. He takes the expression ‘what you see’ materially. ‘The visual impression is what you see’, which is a proposition like ‘The direct object is what he sent’, is misconstrued to so as to lead to ‘He sent her a direct object’.⁷

That is to say, the objects of both thought and experience are intentional; we don’t need to explain hallucination and illusion because what they seem to present us with are

⁵ “In considering ‘perception without belief’ and ‘perception without the acquiring of belief’, it is particularly helpful to think of perception as the acquiring of true or false *information*. A perception which involves an inclination, but no more than an inclination, to believe, may be conceived of as the acquiring of information which we have some tendency, but no more than some tendency, to accept. A perception which involves mere potential belief may be conceived of as the acquiring of information that, because of other information that we already possess, we completely discount. An ‘idle’ perception may be conceived of as information that is completely disregarded, but, incredibly, not because of any other information that we already possess. ‘Perception without the acquiring of belief’ may be conceived of as a case where the information received simply duplicates information that is already at our disposal.” (Armstrong 1968, p. 225)

⁶ “For years I would spend time, in cafés, for example, staring at objects saying to myself: ‘I see a packet. But what do I really see? How can I say that I see here anything more than a yellow expanse?’ [. . .] I always hated phenomenalism and felt trapped by it. I couldn’t see my way out of it but I didn’t believe it.” (quoted in Teichmann 2008, p. 128)

⁷ Anscombe 1965, p. 66.

intentional objects. They do not exist; there is only a description “in the head” of the subject and nothing in the world to correspond to it.

Now, of course, not all objects of experience are like this unless the state is completely hallucinatory. Usually, the object of experience is an object from the subject’s environment (Anscombe calls it “material object”) experienced as having features that it really has and features it does not (a red elephant toy that looks brown-grey), or mostly features it does not possess, case in which the subject cannot recognize it for what it is (I see my watch as a shiny blur over there).

Anscombe gives examples such as these ones:

“When you screw up your eyes looking at a light, you see rays shooting out from it” – it does not follow that there *are* rays shooting out from the light. The rays are mere intentional objects.

“I see the print very blurred: is it blurred, or is it my eyes?” - blurriness is an intentional feature of an existing object of seeing, the print.

“I see six buttons on that man’s coat; I merely see a lot of snow flakes framed by this window-frame; no definite number.”

“... a mirage. An approaching pedestrian may have no feet (they are replaced by a bit of sky).”

“I hear a ringing in my ears.”

“Do you know how a taste can sometimes be quite indeterminate until you know what you are eating?”

“I keep on smelling the smell of burning rubber when, as I find out, there is no such thing.”⁸

Something is not exactly right with these examples. The claim that Anscombe makes is about perception *verbs* – that they are *all* intentional and take intentional objects. But the sense-data theory makes a claim about certain *objects* of perceptual verbs – that sensible qualities that appear must exist. *If something appears red, there is something red.* The latter does not mean that “appear”, “look”, “seem” are not intentional verbs: a sense-data theorist does not deny that if something seems an elephant, there need not be any elephant.

If aimed at sense-data, Anscombe’s argument should have been that sensible qualities too are intentional objects: *if something appears red, nothing needs to be red.* This is also pointed out by G. N. A. Vesey (he refers to other examples from Anscombe’s paper):

An example in terms of which Miss Anscombe sets out to explain her use of the expressions ‘intentional object of sensation’ and ‘material object of sensation’ is that of a man, out shooting, mistaking his father for a stag: a stag is the intentional object of his aiming; his father, its material object. But this will not fit in with her explanation of how the sense-impression philosophers’ position is wrong; for no sense-impression philosopher has held things like stags to be the immediate objects of sensation.⁹

To take just the first example – “When you screw up your eyes looking at a light, you see rays shooting out from it” – a sense-data theorist would not challenge it. I see rays shooting from the light; at the same time, I know that there cannot be any such rays (supposing that I have some notions about physics). Yet, says the sense-data philosopher, the phenomenology of my experience being the way it is, I have to conclude that

⁸ Anscombe 1969, pp. 65-66.

⁹ Vesey 1966, pp. 135-137.

something else, which is not a physical thing (no ray of any kind), is presented to my awareness.

If one wants to argue against sense-data, one has to target the Phenomenal Principle, and in order to be credible in doing so, one has to acknowledge the power of the phenomenological facts it is based on and argue that those phenomenological facts can be accounted for in some other way. The trouble with both Armstrong and Anscombe's views is that they do not even take into consideration the Phenomenal Principle, let apart argue that it is false. By doing so, they simply ignore the root of the problem, which is that the Phenomenal Principle results from a very strong intuition supported by the phenomenology of experience.

According to what Anscombe says, when something appears red to me, the object of my experience is either something red from my environment or no thing at all (red is mere intentional object). If the latter is the case, say, if I have an afterimage, "red" does not apply to anything at all. The question is: how come that the concept *red* is involved? Does it just spring to my mind?¹⁰ To analyze "something seems red to me" as "red is a mere intentional object of the experience I have now" and treat *intentional object* in exactly the same way regardless on whether it concerns thought or experience is to misjudge the force of the Phenomenal Principle. If sense is to be made of the idea that *red*

¹⁰ With the risk of redundancy (considering all that I have already said on the behalf of the phenomenal principle), I will give two more examples:

"When, say, something white looks yellow to you, *in virtue of what does it look, specifically, yellow to you?* What, precisely, is it for such a state of affairs to obtain? What are the minimally sufficient conditions for something to appear yellow to you when nothing relevant is yellow?" (Smith 2002, p. 36)

"Of course, there need not be anything physical or public as an object of awareness (and this is what the English-speaker knows) but, equally obviously, the hallucinating or misperceiving man is aware of something with the same qualitative nature as the apparently present physical object: the empiricist cannot see how anyone can fix his after-image firmly in attention and solemnly affirm that in no sense does there exist at that moment an object of his awareness with a qualitative nature. The empiricist is essentially correct, for the intentionality of the 'seems' locution merely by-passes the task of analyzing the phenomena." (Robinson 1974, p. 306.)

is an intentional object, this can't be done simply by ignoring the Phenomenal Principle: a credible alternative to it needs to be argued for. The difficulty of the task consists in finding a way around the relational view while taking the phenomenology of experience at its face value.

Armstrong's account does not do that either and this is particularly frustrating, as the argument about the transitivity of exact similarity is an argument from *phenomenal* indiscernability. The question is: on what exactly is the similarity of the sensory items judged or misjudged? Anscombe, at least considers perceptual experience a mental state in its own right. Armstrong's claim that experiences that do not correspond to reality and fail to deceive us are inclinations to believe that are held in check by other, stronger beliefs, is deficient on at least two accounts.

For one thing, it gives no explanation as to *why* I have an inclination to believe something that I actually know it's not true – there is nothing red in front of me, and I know that there is nothing red in front of me. What could possibly give rise to an inclination to believe that there is something red (except for the obvious fact, which Armstrong doesn't mention, that the experience has a certain phenomenology)?

For another thing, not allowing experience to be a *sui generis* mental state, the account cannot explain cases such as the following one: I have an experience which does not correspond to anything actual, I don't have any beliefs about my environment, and I don't have any inclination to acquire a new belief either. I am contemplating the red surface hanging out in front of my eyes, which is actually an afterimage. But my mind was somewhere else 5 minutes ago when I was looking at a bright light; without realizing it, I turned my eyes away and suddenly my attention was captured by the red surface. I'm

contemplating it without knowing that it is an afterimage, yet I don't have any inclination to believe anything whatsoever. The answer (which seems obvious and which is not available to Armstrong) is that *experience is a mental state on its own, with its own content*. Armstrong's theory only allows that experience is the acquiring (or the tendency to acquire) of belief-contents.

5.3 The Double-Layer View

At this point, I need to say a bit more about a certain structure of experience that the sense-data theory accommodates. There are several versions of the sense-data theory; the topic is vast and its intricacies are well beyond the scope of this thesis. I will concentrate on certain elements that are relevant for my topic.

Sense-data theory is a 2-layer view about perceptual experience¹¹: the bottom level is constituted by a relation between awareness and the sense-data; at the upper level the sense-data are conceptually interpreted. This has been viewed (at least by the early sense-data theorists) as a relation between the sense-data and a judgment or, as we say today, a content. The end result is the perception of external things.

The awareness of the sense-datum and the interpretation of it are simultaneous. Their simultaneity is postulated to account for the fact that there does not seem to be any moment when we are aware of a bare, non-interpreted datum¹². When reviewing sense-

¹¹ This is what M. Tye calls it: "Sense-datum theorists are committed to the view that perceptual experience (broadly understood) is layered. The basic or foundational layer consists in seeing or sensing colored expanses, the upper layer consists in the conceptual representation of common-sense physical objects and their standard properties and relations. Seeing that the tomato is red consists in sensing a red, round, bulgy sense-datum and, on that basis, judging that there is a red tomato present.' (Tye 1996, p. 117)

¹² "[...] we have no consciousness of such a first state of intuition unqualified by thought, though we *do* observe alteration and extension of interpretation of a given content as a psychological temporal process." (Lewis 1956, p. 66)

data theory, Roderick Firth¹³ points out that the classical empiricist view (Locke and Berkeley) about the structure of experience is that the two elements, awareness of sensation and judgment, are “one after the other” and that perception is a process of discursive inference in which a sensation “suggests” a physical object to the subject.

However, the direct successor of the classical empiricist view, the sense-data theory, has rejected that view in favor of the simultaneity view. Sense-data philosophers

believe that perceptual consciousness is a twofold state consisting of (1) direct awareness of a sense-datum and (2) an element of interpretation (variously described as ‘belief’, ‘acceptance’, ‘expectation’, ‘judgment’, etc.) and they believe that these two parts exist simultaneously. In perceiving an apple, for example, the sense-datum – perhaps a round, red patch – is *one part* of what is before our minds; the element of interpretation which distinguishes the perception of an apple from the perception of a tomato, is the *other*.¹⁴

The phenomenal principle concerns sensible qualities, colors and shapes (round and red), not particulars such as apples and chairs and trees and unicorns. The sense-data theory does not deny that perceptual experience is an intentional state. It just explains its intentionality in a certain way: intentionality appears at the second level, where sense-data are interpreted. The judgment is the element responsible for the intentionality of experience.

The following question arises: If the visual experience of a unicorn is intentional because of the associated judgment, and if the visual experience of something red is said not to be intentional, then what is thus being said? That there is no interpretation associated with the awareness of red? The answer is “no”.

That at the level of sensible qualities experience is not intentional does not mean that there is no element of interpretation associated with them. Because there surely is:

¹³ R. Firth, “Sense-Data and the Percept Theory”, in Swartz 1965.

¹⁴ Swartz 1965, p. 217.

when I am aware of something red, I am aware of it *as* red. The idea is that the associated element of interpretation cannot be false: the judgment “*that* is red”, which is simultaneous with the awareness of red, cannot be false; *the content is always satisfied*. The claim is rather that some contents (those involving sensible qualities) are always satisfied, or that some judgments are incorrigible.

Sense-data philosophers describe perceptual experience as the mental event in which something is present to consciousness in a very peculiar manner: “That peculiar and ultimate manner of being present to consciousness is called *being given*, and that which is thus present is called a *datum*.”¹⁵ Responsible for the peculiarity of the presentation is the datum itself and only the datum. What singles out experience from all other mental acts is that the sense-datum has a peculiar characteristic, *sensuousness*, which makes *sensing*, or the *apprehension* of the sense-datum, a mental act very different from all other kinds of mental acts (remembering, contemplating a mental image, thinking).

What differentiates between experience and other mental acts is not that different kinds of apprehensions are involved: “the difference seems to be wholly on the side of the data.”¹⁶ In a language more familiar to us nowadays, this means that the phenomenal character of experience is determined by the sense-data; what makes experience a mental act very different from thinking is this phenomenal feature – *sensuousness* – which thought lacks.

The fact that the apprehension of the sense-datum (the given) is very different from any other mental act does not imply that there is no thinking, no conceptualization

¹⁵ Price 1932, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

associated with the apprehension; it does not mean that the sensuousness of the datum presents itself to awareness “naked” of any conceptual “accessories”. The idea is that the apprehension of the sense-datum has something that thought lacks (a particular kind of phenomenal character); the idea is not that the apprehension of the sense-datum lacks something which thought has (involvement of concepts).

Whether conceptualization is involved or not is beside the point. The uniqueness of the apprehension of sense-data is independent from this aspect. The claim that nothing can be apprehended unless it is apprehended *as* something: as *red*, as *round*, as *over there* is not an objection to anything. Price discusses the objection that

it is impossible to apprehend something without apprehending at least some of its qualities and relations. In the language of Cambridge logicians, what we apprehend is always a *fact* – something of the form ‘that A is B’, or the ‘B-ness of A’. You cannot apprehend just A. For instance, you cannot apprehend a round red patch without apprehending that it is red and round and has special spatial relations. But if we apprehend that it has these qualities and relations, we are not passively ‘receiving’ or (as it were) swallowing; we are actively thinking – judging or classifying – and it is impossible to do less than this.¹⁷

His answer is the following:

[...] it is very likely true, but it is irrelevant. The argument only proves that nothing stands *merely* in the relation of givenness to the mind, without also standing in other relations: i.e. that what is given is also ‘thought about’ in some sense or other of that ambiguous phrase. But this does not have the slightest tendency to prove that *nothing is given at all*. That fact that A and B are constantly conjoined, or even necessarily connected, does not have the slightest tendency to prove that A does not exist. How could it, since it itself presupposes the existence of A?¹⁸

I may not be able to apprehend what I am apprehending now in any other way except *as* red and *as* round, but then *something* must be thus apprehended. Once again, this kind of apprehension is unique not because no conceptualization is involved; it is unique because

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

no other kind of apprehension is like the apprehension of those features which are conceptualized *as* round and *as* red. It is unique because no other kind of mental act has this kind of phenomenal character. Experiencing something red is different from thinking of something red, as Broad points out:

An essential feature of any experience which Russell would describe as ‘being acquainted with a certain particular’ is that the latter presents itself to the experience as having a certain quality, e.g., as red, as hot, as squeaky. [...] I use the expression ‘S prehends x as red’ as precisely equivalent to the phrase ‘x sensibly presents itself to S as red. [...] The meaning of these phrases cannot be defined, it can only be exemplified. One thing that is certain is that toprehend x as red is utterly different from *judging* that it is red or *knowing* that it is red. In the dark and with my eyes shut I can judge that my doctor’s gown is red, and in one sense of ‘know’ I may be said to know that it is red. But in such conditions I am not prehending anything as red, or, what is precisely equivalent, nothing is sensibly presented to me as red.¹⁹

To sum it up, experience is different from thought because it has phenomenological features that thought does not have. *This* and nothing else is the reason why the sense-data philosopher does not accept the analogy with thought. To argue that the sense-data inference is a fallacy because it is analogous with certain inferences which are clearly false in the case of thought is to be oblivious to the phenomenological difference. Here is why:

The following conditional is false:

(1) If I believe that there is a beer in the fridge, there is a beer in the fridge.

The conditional that the sense-data theory is committed to does not have the same structure as (1). (1) has the same structure as (2), which is not the conditional endorsed by the sense-data theory:

(2) If there seems to be a red spot on the wall, there is a red spot on the wall.

The conditional that the sense-data theory is committed to is:

¹⁹ In Schwarz 1965, p. 43.

(3) If there seems to be a red spot on the wall, something else is red.

In the case of thought, the conditional that has the same structure as (3) is:

(3') If I believe that there is a red spot on the wall, something else than a spot on the wall is red.

Those who think that the sense-data inference is a fallacy argue in the following way: (3) is analogous to (3') and (3') is false. Therefore (3) is false too.

But the sense-data philosopher does not accept that (3) is analogous to (3'). She would say that (3') is false whereas (3) is true. The truth of (3) follows from acknowledging that experience has phenomenal features that thought lacks.

M. G. F. Martin points out that to argue that the sense-data inference is a fallacy because it makes such a simple mistake is to say that all philosophers, past and present, committed to the argument from illusion were wrong²⁰. Yet these philosophers do not make the same mistake about thought, as one would expect. They treat thought and experience differently and when it comes to thought they are fully aware of the problems involved (thinking about the non-existent). Therefore, it must be something else: it is the phenomenology of experience which is so different from that of thought.

²⁰ “[...] it should be fairly clear that these criticisms of the argument, if aimed partly at understanding past uses of the argument from illusion as well as simply repudiating it, are plainly inadequate. For the errors of reasoning that these authors impute to past proponents of the argument are very obvious ones. If we simply reflect on the parallel examples for cases other than perception, we can see that we have little inclination to accept the move as valid. Either we are inclined straight off to reject it, or at least to see it as questionable. If there is no more to the argument than asking us to make a move we find so mistaken in the other cases, then the suggestion is simply that the argument’s proponents are making an obviously fallacious move.” (Martin, *ms.* Ch. 1, p. 20.)

5.4 Intentionality as a Phenomenal Feature

Not all “early” intentionality-of-experience claims ignored the phenomenology of experience. The idea that intentionality is a phenomenal feature appears for the first time in Vesey and Chisholm, who acknowledge that the phenomenology of experience is different from that of thought and argue that it can be explained without having to accept the phenomenal principle.

Sense-data theory distinguishes neatly between the sensory and the conceptual elements of perception; undergoing an experience is standing in two relations simultaneously: one to a sense-datum, the other to a judgment²¹. The former is responsible for the sensuousness of experience (its phenomenal character), the latter for its intentionality. Vesey, I think, is the first philosopher to challenge the separation between the phenomenal and the intentional and to give a formulation of what nowadays is the thesis of intentionalism: all phenomenal features are directed.

5.4.1 “All Seeing Is Seeing As”

One of Vesey’s arguments against sense-data is the following:

Suppose that an object looks green to me but, after paying more attention to it, I realize that it looks a particular shade of green – green peacock. The judgment which, according to sense-data theory, is an element of experience is first that something is green, then it is replaced by the judgment that something is peacock green, but the evidence for both

²¹ A judgment is not necessarily a full-blown propositional content. When I see an apple I’m judging the bulgy yellow sense-datum to be an apple, that is, I apply the concept ‘apple’ to what I am presented with (I take it to be an apple).

judgments is supposed to be the same in both cases: a peacock green sense-datum. Therefore, there is no explanation as to *why* the judgment has changed. It cannot be that in the first case attention was missing, he says, since the awareness of the datum is supposed to be immediate, and “attention is a necessary condition for perceptual awareness”²².

How come that the judgment changes if the sense-datum stays the same, given that what is judged is the sense-datum? There is no explanation to this in terms of sense-data, claims Vesey. His explanation is that the sense-data theory is wrong about the structure of experience: experience does not consist of two layers, one responsible for the sensuousness of experience, the other for its intentionality. Experience is one layer only, which is both phenomenal and intentional; if there is variation in one there is variation in the other. There is a very contemporary ring to this; it sounds like an intentionalism claim.

Another argument that Vesey uses is that the objects of experience can be indeterminate, or display features that no *things* have. One such case is that of two different appearances of a reversible figure:

If the two different ‘appearances’ of a reversible figure were indeed things (‘pictures’) we could conceive of them projected out from our minds, on to a screen, side by side, and distinguishable. But the only images on the screen

²² “I conclude that, if we are immediately aware of the sense-datum, and if the sense-datum itself, in virtue of our being immediately aware of it, constitutes our evidence for whatever we think about it, then there can be no explanation for our thought about the sense-datum being whatever that thought is. There can be no explanation on the lines of the ‘lack of attention’ explanation of our not being perceptually aware of the fully determinate qualities of material things; for our awareness of the peacock green sense-datum, whether we think of it as peacock green, green, or merely colored, is the same – immediate. And there can be no explanation on the lines of our being aware of a different object; for in each case it is the same, fully determined sense-datum of which we are aware.” (G. N. A. Vesey, ‘Seeing and Seeing As’, in Swartz 1965, p. 81)

which could serve as projections of the two different ‘appearances’ would be identical.”²³

Arguably, this is supposed to show that the objects of experience have features that no thing can have; therefore, they are intentional objects and not sense-data. The argument (which is hardly convincing, but I will not talk about it. I will just say that a sense-data theorist would not have particular problems with it) is similar to Anscombe’s argument that intentional objects are not entities of any kind.

The alternative to sense-data, according Vesey, is to acknowledge that what is judged is not a sense-datum (and neither a physical thing), but that the phenomenal features of experience themselves can “say”, truly or falsely, that something is the case. He expressed it with the slogan “all seeing is seeing as”²⁴. Experience is true if the environment is the way it seems to the subject; it is false if the environment is not the way it seems to the subject to be. As we would say today, *experience is assessable for accuracy and it has this feature in virtue of its phenomenal character*: if something looks F, it is with me as if there is an F at location x.

Which does not mean that I believe that there is an F at location x. Experience may have the same content a belief has but it is different from belief. A white wall looks blue under a certain light, yet I do not believe that the wall is blue, because I know that it is white. This is a case of the following sort: things *look* a certain way to me, but, because

²³ P. 79, note 5.

²⁴ “All seeing is seeing as.” In other words, if a person sees something at all it must look like something to him, even if it only looks like ‘somebody doing something’. The less definite one’s perception, the less chance of its being non-veridical, but also the less chance of its being useful. Another way of expressing the point that all seeing is seeing as is to say that perceptions, like judgments, are either true or false. They are true when what the object looks like to somebody, that is, what on looking at it the person would take it to be if he had no reason to think otherwise, is what the object is; false otherwise.” (Swartz 1965, p. 73)

of background information that I have, I do not believe that things *are* that way²⁵. Background information can be knowledge that the conditions are abnormal, or knowledge about the way things really are, or knowledge about illusions, etc. If it weren't for the background information (which constitutes the intellectual sophistication of any rational perceiver), I would also acquire the belief that things are the way they look, but the way things look is not just a tendency to believe kept in check by background information (as Armstrong says).

The tendency to believe arises because experience has certain phenomenological features: it is with me as if the things in my environment are a certain way. When a white wall looks blue to me, it is with me the way it is when I see a wall that is blue. The *look* of things is a phenomenal feature. *Looking* is not *believing that*

Whenever we see an object it looks like something, or looks to have some quality. But its looking thus is not to be identified with our judging it to be what it looks like. Nor is its looking thus to be identified with a judgment about some other thing, for in no 'thing' can we incorporate such conditions of observation as out attention to the features of an object. In other words, *the look of a thing is something phenomenal, not intellectual* [my italics].²⁶

It is true that nothing can look like a tomato if I don't have the concept *tomato*. That the look of thing is something phenomenal and not intellectual does not mean that no concepts are needed²⁷. It means that the phenomenal itself is directed. In nowadays parlance: instead of claiming that experience is a relation and instead of separating the intentional from the phenomenal, attributing the latter to the sense-data and the former to

²⁵ "A stick half in the water looks bent to both the man who says 'It's bent' and the man who says 'It looks bent'. But the man who says 'It looks bent' thereby exhibits his sophistication in the matter of how an object's being half in the water leads to his seeing it otherwise than what it is.

What an object looks like to somebody is what, on looking at it, that person would take it to be, if he had no reason to think otherwise. If he has a reason to think otherwise then he says, not 'It is...', but 'It looks...'. (in Swartz 1965, p. 69)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁷ "But this is not to deny that experience and judgment are connected: for what an object looks like is what he would judge that object to be if he had no reasons to judge otherwise." (*ibid.*, p. 83)

the conceptualization of the sense-data, it can be claimed that experience has a certain property, its phenomenal character, which is essentially intentional.

Vesey's view can be summarized the following way: I cannot have an experience which does not seem to be of anything; at the same time, I may not believe things to be the way they seem to be. This means: a) that experience has content or is assessable for accuracy in virtue of its having phenomenal features; b) the content of experience need not the content of any belief that I have. On the other hand (and most important for developing an alternative to sense-data theory), although the phenomenology is such that experience seems to be a relation, it is not, since no thing can have the features displayed by what is before the mind.

5.4.2 Chisholm – the Non-Comparative Use of ‘Look’

Chisholm's interest in perception was mostly epistemological. He needed to argue that certain perceptual beliefs are self-justifying and, at the same time, keep sense-data out of the picture. But he took seriously the challenge posed by the phenomenal principle. He never called himself an intentionalist and, although he argued that perception, like thought, is intentional, and that the phenomenology of experience can be accounted for in non-relational terms, he never put the two views explicitly together in a theory of intentionality. However, they are there for everybody to see and contemporary philosophers have not missed the opportunity to put these ideas to work towards producing theories of intentionality²⁸.

Long before the expression “phenomenal character” entered the philosophical vocabulary, Chisholm's argument about the non-comparative use of “appear”/ “look”

²⁸ Tye 1995 and Kriegel 2007 propose theories of intentionality of experience based on adverbialist accounts.

makes the case for an essential phenomenal feature of experience. I will make some preliminary points before discussing it.

When a white wall looks blue to me, it looks the way a blue wall looks in normal light. It seems that I cannot use “looks blue” unless I know how to use “blue”, and that *looks blue* is dependent on *blue*: nothing could look blue if there were no blue things in the world.

According to the sense-data theory, it is the other way around. When something *looks blue*, I am aware of a blue sense-datum. My contact with blue things in the world is mediated by blue sense-data; “blue” applies to both blue sense-data and blue things in the world. I learn to apply “blue” from being aware of a blue sense-datum, and when I am aware of a *blue* sense-datum, something *appears blue*. Therefore, I can use “blue” only if something *looks blue*.

About this, Anscombe says the following:

[...] we ought to say, not ‘Being red is looking red in normal light to the normal sighted’, but rather ‘Looking red is looking as a thing that *is* red looks in normal light to the normal-sighted.’ For if we ought rather to say the first, then how do we understand ‘looking red’? Not by understanding ‘red’ and ‘looking’. It would have to be explained as a simple idea; and so would any other color. It may be replied: these are all simple ideas; “looking yellow”, and “looking red” are the *right* expressions for what you show someone when you show him yellow and red, for he will only learn ‘yellow’ and ‘red’ from the examples if they look yellow and look red; so it is *looking-yellow* and *looking-red* that he really gets hold of and been introduced to, even though you *say* you are explaining ‘yellow’ and ‘red’. This would come to saying that in strictness ‘looking’ should be part of every color word in reports of perception: *it will then cease to perform the actual function of the word ‘looking’*.”²⁹

There is a problem with what she says. If I know what blue is, then “the wall looks blue” means that it looks the way a blue wall looks in normal light. But if I have never seen anything blue in my life and someone tells me “they brought us in a room

²⁹ Anscombe 1965, pp. 67-68.

with a very high ceiling that looked blue”, it is of no use to be told that the ceiling looked the way blue ceilings look in normal light because I would immediately ask: “and what way is that?” Then the person I am talking to would have to bring me a blue thing, point to it, and say: “*this way*”. At that moment, I learn what *looks blue* is and I do learn it “as a simple idea”: from “*this way*”, from having an experience with a certain phenomenal character.

On this occasion I may realize that I do know what *looks blue* is because I had that experience before; what I didn’t know was that “this” and “looks blue” have the same reference. To learn what “looks blue” means I don’t need to know the meaning of either “look” or “blue” – I only need to have the right experience. When the experience coincides with being told that I see *blue*, I learn two things at once: what *looks blue* is and also what *blue* is. When shown the blue thing, I would probably reply: “oh, so this is what blue looks like!” But I could also say: “so, this is blue!” I also learn to associate *looks blue* with *blue* and from this moment on, I will be able to use “looks blue” comparatively.

Most importantly, learning about *blue* and *looks blue*, I also learn something about myself – *what it is like to see blue*. The thing is, “looks blue” may refer to the way a blue thing appears, but also to the way it is with me when I see a blue thing. M. G. F. Martin points out this ambiguity:

[...] when I tell you:

It looks to Dan as if there is a rosy-hued glass of milk before him
I may intend to emphasise how things are with Dan, and to contrast the fact that Dan has a certain kind of experience with the fact that Mary is asleep, or that Ben has an altogether different kind of experience. So we can imagine that the following underlined aspect of the sentence would be up for substitution in contrasting the way Dan is, with how else he might have been:

(1’) It looks to Dan as if there is a rosy-hued glass of milk before him

On the other hand, given that this is in fact a case in which Dan is perceiving the glass of milk, we might rather be interested in what aspects of the milk are evident to Dan. In this case we may be interested that it is the specific shade that the milk has that is manifest to him, in contrast to the maker's mark on the glass. In that case, the following underlined aspect of the sentence would be open to substitution to contrast ways in which the situation might have differed:

(1") It looks to Dan as if there is a rosy-hued glass of milk before him

So in moving from talk of something appearing *F* to someone, to talk of appearances, qualities of experience or *qualia*, the loss in complexity of the semantic structure leaves one open to equivocation between properties of what appears and properties of what is appeared to.³⁰

When "looks blue" refers to the way a thing appears, it is used comparatively: it means that the thing appears the way blue things appear in certain standard conditions. We may call it, as Chisholm did, the "comparative use of looks blue". When "looks blue" is used to refer to the way it is with the subject (the phenomenal character of experience), it is primitive and does not compare anything; this is the "non-comparative use of looks blue", or "the phenomenal use", as Jackson (1977) calls it.

Chisholm is probably the first philosopher to theorize about the distinction between the two uses of "appear/look" at a time when the expression "phenomenal character" was still unknown. For this reason, the way he argues may be a bit obscure for the contemporary reader.

Chisholm distinguishes three uses of "appear": *epistemic*, *comparative* and *non-comparative*³¹ :

The *epistemic* use of "x appears so-and-so to S" is to communicate that S believes or is inclined to believe that S is so-and-so. I say "the ship appears to be moving" to indicate that I believe that the ship is moving.

³⁰ Martin 1998, pp. 163-164.

³¹ Chisholm 1957, Chapter 4.

Sometimes “appears” does not imply that S believes or is inclined to believe that x is so-and-so. “X appears so-and-so” used this way signals that x is *compared* with things which *are* so-and-so: x *appears* to S in the way in which things that are *f* appear under conditions which are such-and such³².

As for the *non-comparative* use, Chisholm describes it in the following way:

When ‘x looks red’ is taken in its comparative sense, the statement

(1) The mountainside looks red

entails some statement, of the following sort, about things that *are* red:

(2) The mountainside looks the way red things look in daylight.

The essential point is this: When ‘looks red’ is used comparatively, it may be replaced by an expression of the form ‘looks the way red thing look under... conditions’, and the statement resulting from such replacement is entailed by the original statement.

But when ‘looks red’ is used *noncomparatively*, in a statement of the form ‘x looks red’, the statement does not *entail* any statement of the form ‘x looks the way red things look under ... conditions’. If ‘looks red’ is taken noncomparatively in (1), then (1) does not *entail* (2) – even though (1) may be true only if (2) is true.

When ‘looks red’ is used comparatively, the statement

(3) Things which are red look red in daylight

is analytic, for it says, of the way red things look in daylight, only that it is the way red things look in daylight. [...] But when ‘looks red’ is taken *noncomparatively*, (3) is synthetic – an ‘empirical generalization’.³³

“x looks red” used comparatively entails “x looks the way red things look in such-and-such conditions”, whereas when it is used non-comparatively it does not, although “x looks red” is true only if “x looks the way red things look in such-and-such conditions” is true. Translated in more familiar terms, the idea is that when “looks red” refers to the phenomenal character, the sentence in which it occurs is about the subject, therefore it does not entail a sentence about the way red things appear. (3) is synthetic in this case,

³² “When people point out that straight sticks sometimes ‘look bent’ in water, that loud things ‘sound faint’ from far away, that parallel tracks often ‘appear to converge’, or ‘look convergent’, that square things ‘look diamond-shaped’ when approached obliquely, they do not believe that these things have the characteristics they appear to have.” (Chisholm 1957, pp. 44-45)

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

because it says that red things cause in me experiences with a certain phenomenal character – it is an empirical claim.

The claim made by sense-data theory that I discussed in the beginning of this section is correct insofar as it is true that I learn to apply “blue” from having the right experience, an experience with a certain phenomenal character. This is true regardless on what analysis is being given to the phenomenal character – in terms of sense-data, intentionalism, of qualia – and whoever recognizes that experience has phenomenal character has to accept it. For something to look a certain way, any way actually, I have to have perceptual experiences. Nothing can look any way unless I have an experience: experiencing is a necessary condition for something to look F. *If something looks F to me, I undergo an experience with a particular phenomenal character P_F .*

For Chisholm, the non-comparative use of “look” is important because it singles out sentences that are self-justified³⁴, but its value is as much phenomenological as it is epistemological: I may doubt that there is anything red in my environment, but I cannot doubt that something looks red to me. I cannot doubt that I experience in a certain way.

5.4.3 Chisholm – How Not to Reify Appearances

With the recognition of the non-comparative use of “appear”/ “look”, the phenomenology of experience is taken at its face value. However, it does not compel us to accept sense-data, according to Chisholm. Appearances are not colored surfaces of mind-dependent particulars; they can and should be analyzed as ways of sensing, as modifications of the

³⁴ “[...] there are certain ways of ‘being appeared to’ which can be described by using appear words noncomparatively and which are such that, whenever any subject S is ‘appeared to’ in one of those ways, S then has adequate evidence for the proposition that he is being appeared to in that particular way.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68)

subject / ways of being conscious. He followed Ducasse's idea, which, in a famous debate, was offered as alternative the act-object model of experience that G. E. Moore argued for³⁵. The view is today known as "adverbialism" because it treats as an adverb what grammar says that it is a direct object (red) of the verb appear/look. The idea is the following:

(4) x appears red to S

is sometimes rendered as

(5) x presents a red appearance to S,

but this is misleading. Despite the fact that grammatically (5) resembles statements such as "John presents an expensive gift to Mary", where the adjective attributes a property to the noun following it, the same is not true about (5): "red" should not be taken as attributing a property to a thing denoted by "appearance". Grammatical resemblance between these sentences is deceptive. Rather, "appears" and "red" should be taken together – "appearsred" – as attributing something to x.

(4) should be rather rendered as

(6) S is appeared to redly by x

or, alternatively, as

(7) S senses redly with respect to x.

"S is appeared to redly" attributes a monadic property to S, or a way of sensing. Instead of attributing the property of being red to a thing – an appearance – it attributes a property to S: that of *being appeared to redly*, or *sensing redly*. In other words, S senses (or is conscious) in a certain way – *redly*. Instead of talking of appearances, we can talk about ways of sensing.

³⁵ C. J. Ducasse, 'Moore's Refutation of Idealism', in Schilpp 1952.

At the same time, “x appears red” also attributes a property to x: that of causing S to be appeared to in a certain way³⁶. “Appears red” cannot be attributed to x when there is no S, while “being appeared to / sensing redly” can be attributed to S independently of any x. “X appears red” entails “S is being appeared to /senses redly”, whereas “S is being appeared to/senses redly” does not entail “there is an x which appears red to S”.

Chisholm’s contribution to the debate about the intentionality of experience is important because, as I said, he recognizes that there is something undeniable about experience (phenomenal character), while giving it an analysis alternative to sense data: *If something looks red to me, I sense redly.*

I can conclude now the discussion about the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims. What all the views discussed in this chapter have in common is that they all fight the phenomenal principle with the claim that perceptual experience is intentional. Otherwise each of them backs it up in a different way:

When something looks F to S,

- S acquires the belief (or has the tendency of believing) that there is something F (Armstrong);
- F is an intentional object and intentional objects are grammatical features (Anscombe);
- In virtue of its phenomenal features, experience itself “says”, truly or falsely, that something is F (experience is assessable for accuracy). (Vesey);
- S senses F-ly (Chisholm).

³⁶ “ ‘x appears ... to S’ means: (i) as a consequence of x being a proper stimulus of S, S senses ...; and (ii) in sensing ..., S senses in a way that is functionally dependent upon the stimulus energy produced in S by x.” (Chisholm 1957, p. 148-149)

While Armstrong and Anscombe argue against the relational view of experience without taking its phenomenology into account, Vesey and Chisholm do take the phenomenology of experience seriously, and give an alternative to the relational view.

At the same time, the shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience has already occurred with Vesey's points that the phenomenology itself is directed.

A question arises naturally: is there a connection between the phenomenology of experience being explained in a non-relational way and the idea that the phenomenal itself is intentional? Is it that simply by adopting the view that the phenomenal character of experience is essentially directed one is committed to a non-relational view? Or maybe the other way around: if one argues that experience is non-relational (the phenomenal character is to be analyzed in terms of a (first or second-order) property of the conscious subject/experience), is one committed to the thesis of intentionalism?

I do not think either to be the case. A view such as Chisholm's – that the phenomenal character is to be analyzed as a way of sensing – is by no means compelled to be an intentionalist view. From using adverbialism to give an analysis to "something seems F to S" to intentionalism, there is one further step to be taken: to argue that sensing F-ly is essentially directed. That S cannot sense F-ly without being with her as if she is presented with an F *external*. Whether this step is taken or not, it is a further matter – it depends on what intuitions the philosopher who adopts adverbialism has. It may be that she does not have the intuition that the phenomenal character is essentially directed and that all she wants is to argue against sense-data theory. By itself, adverbialism can be a

separatist theory. What is a separatist theory? It will be discussed in the next chapter. I will say just one more thing here:

I also believe that you can have the intentionalist intuition (that the phenomenal character is essentially directed – it is with me as if I am presented with something external) while also being a sense-data philosopher (more about this in the last chapter).

6 Intentional vs. Phenomenal

I have started with a broad question and a narrow one. The broad question is: “what do philosophers mean when they say that perceptual experience is intentional?” In the previous chapter, I looked at several answers to this question.

The narrow question concerns intentionalism, the family of intentionalist views about perceptual experience characterized by the thesis that *every phenomenal feature entails an intentional property*: is a relational view, such as the sense-data theory, compatible or incompatible with intentionalism?

At first glance, it does not seem completely implausible that a version of the sense-data theory could satisfy the intentionalist thesis. What is more, the main argument for intentionalism, the *transparency* argument, does not seem to be an argument against sense-data. There are philosophers who have said that sense-data theory can endorse transparency, while others have claimed the opposite – that transparency is an argument against sense-data.

I claim that, although the “early” intentionality-of-experience claims were directed against sense-data, intentionalism is compatible with sense-data. Because the intentionality claims that were first used (mostly) against sense-data theory *are different* from the intentionality claims which constitute intentionalism. A significant shift has occurred in the debate about the intentionality of experience:

* Intentionality is (a) *directedness towards an object transcendent to (or independent from) experience*. (a) entails (b) *experience has an object* and (c) *the object of experience may not exist*.

* For perceptual experience, which I am discussing, essential to the notion of directedness towards object is

(a') *the subject S takes her experience to be of an external F*.

(a') entails (b') *the subject S takes her experience to have an object F*.

(a') and (b') are the phenomenological counterparts of (a) and (b). There can be no phenomenological counterpart for (c) since there is no such thing as *being with S as if the object of her experience does not exist*. While directedness is a phenomenal notion, the possible non-existence of the object is not.

Someone who thinks that consciousness is essential for intentionality would extend (a') and (b') to all intentional states. Someone who thinks that intentionality is independent from consciousness would insist that intentionality, in general, is (a), whereas (a') would be accepted for experience provided that consciousness is explained in terms of intentionality, therefore (a')'s being the case is determined by (a) (conscious directedness is determined by non-conscious directedness).

* Sense-data theory endorses (b') (insofar as it claims that all experiences *have objects*), and \sim (c).

* The “early” intentionality-of-experience claims were directed against the phenomenal principle, therefore the emphasis was on (c): *If something seems (phenomenally F) to S, nothing needs to be F; what seems to be F is a (mere) intentional object.*

* Intentionalism is committed to (a’).

* Sense-data theory can be shown compatible with (a’) if it can be argued successfully that sense-data are intrinsically directed.

Such a view may be eccentric and redundant, but not untenable and, most importantly, not contradictory. It may be said that it is utterly redundant: why would anyone cling to sense-data at all if she believes that all phenomenal features are intentional? That is so, but what if someone has two equally strong intuitions about experience, one expressible with the phenomenal principle, the other with the transparency claim? There could be a compromising solution for this: decide that sense-data are essentially directed.

The possibility of arguing for such a solution is secondary here. The main point I want to make is that *there has been a shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience: from claiming that the immediate object of experience may not exist to claiming that, phenomenally, experience is essentially directed to things external to it. The former is a claim about the structure of experience – that it is not relational; the latter is a claim about the phenomenal character of experience.*

Changing the emphasis from (c) to (a') makes it possible to say, coherently, that experience is essentially directed and that experience is essentially a relation: the immediate object of experience – a sense-datum – is essentially of something external.

6.1 A Chart of the Territory

In the previous chapter, I looked at some early claims that perceptual experience is intentional. Some of them have become well known, mostly because they have been mentioned whenever the idea that perceptual experience is intentional was discussed, whereas others were forgotten until quite recently, when phenomenal intentionalism has reclaimed some of them. Anscombe and Armstrong have been among the most quoted.

Chisholm is quoted quite often too because he plays such an important role in coining the contemporary notion of intentionality. Apart from being recognized for introducing Brentano to the analytic philosophy, he also gets credits for the argument that the object is transcendent to the act, for Brentano's thesis and for formulating the criteria of intentionality. His adverbialism too has become a favorite metaphysical theory for framing an intentionalist view, although the relevance of his discussion about the non-comparative use of "look/appear" is still largely ignored. As for Vesey, he is barely ever mentioned.

That is to say, the tendency has been to use intentionalist analyses that ignore the phenomenology of experience. It is as if the role played by the phenomenal principle in the arguments for something as unpalatable (for the majority of philosophers nowadays) as sense-data discredited any discussion involving phenomenological considerations.

When the sense-data theory ceased to be popular, its place at the center of controversy about perceptual experience was taken by the *qualia* view.

In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Janet Levin gives the following definition to *qualia*:

The terms ‘quale’ and ‘*qualia*’ (plural) are most commonly used to characterize what may be called the qualitative, phenomenal or ‘felt’ properties of our mental states, such as the throbbing pain of my current headache, or the peculiar blue of the afterimage I am experiencing now.¹

Intrinsic, qualitative properties are not very different from sense-data when it comes to making coherent the picture of physicalism², so physicalist philosophers have started to argue that those properties are intentional (the assumption being that intentionality is easier to fit into the physicalist picture given that the project of naturalizing intentionality had many enthusiasts at some point).

For a while, it was customary to associate any commitment to the idea that experience has phenomenal character to an endorsement of *qualia*. This is mostly due to that the fact that the phenomenal character used to be identified with *qualia*, as the notion of phenomenal character made it into the debate through the *qualia* views. What else is being described by “the throbbing pain of my current headache, or the peculiar blue of the afterimage I am experiencing now”, if not phenomenal characters?

Block too wrote:

Qualia include the ways things look, sound and smell, the way it feels to have a pain, and more generally, what it's like to have experiential mental states. (‘*Qualia*’ is the plural of ‘*quale*’.) *Qualia* are experiential properties of

¹ Janet Levin, ‘*Qualia*’, in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1988), Phil of Mind, Version 1.0, London and New York: Routledge, p. 422.

² “It seems undeniable that our sensations and perceptions have qualitative properties. However, many philosophers have claimed that the distinctive feels of pains, after-images and other sensations are so radically different from objective properties such as mass or length that they could not be identical with any physical or functional properties of the brain and nervous system.” (*ibid.*)

sensations, feelings, perceptions and, more controversially, thoughts and desires as well.³

I take it that “the way things seem to us” denotes a phenomenal character; a *quale* is the property in virtue of which experience has phenomenal character, according to the *qualia* view. The former is an *explanandum*, the latter an *explanans*. So someone who does not doubt that experience has phenomenal character is not necessarily committed to *qualia*, since it is not the only possible *explanans*. To use “*qualia*” for referring to the phenomena character is to confuse the *explanans* with the *explanandum*.

However, there are reasons for that: the idea to give the phenomenal character a *qualia*-free analysis emerged later, when it started to be acknowledged that experiences have phenomenal character (that it is like something it is to undergo them) and some philosophers were uncomfortable with the idea of analyzing it in terms of *qualia* either because of a different philosophical agenda (say, defending physicalism), or just different intuitions. (It would be mistaken to think that all such analyses have been motivated by the desire to naturalize *qualia*.)

Among all the views and theories that profess the intentionality of experience, I consider intentionalism to be special because it does something that has not been done before: take the phenomenology of experience seriously. Even in its reductionist versions, intentionalism acknowledges the existence of phenomenal character as a feature of perceptual experience. To make some things clearer, I need to say a bit more about the dialectic of the intentionality-of-experience debate.

³ Block, ‘*QUALIA*: What it is like to have an experience’. Online papers, url: < <http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/block/papers/qualiagregory.pdf> >

The first claims that experience is intentional were mainly directed against the sense-data theory but also against naïve realism; the idea that experience is relational was the target. Thus, it first seemed that the issue about the intentionality of experience boils down to that of the structure of experience: *intentional* is being contrasted with *relational*.

Yet, on the one hand, no view, relational or not, denies that experience is intentional; they just have different views about intentionality (for instance, that experience is not essentially intentional but it becomes so). On the other hand, after sense-data were no longer fashionable, the intentionalist attacks were directed against the *qualia* view, which is *not* a relational view. What was at stake was not the relational/non-relational structure of experience anymore.

The *qualia* view brought in the notion of phenomenal character, this time explicitly (as opposed to implicit early attempts to take it into account, *i.e.*, Chisholm's and Vesey's). The association between phenomenal character and *qualia* made the attacks on *qualia* look like a refusal to acknowledge the existence of phenomenal character as a feature of experience; about some intentionality-claims this was actually true.

What almost established a stereotype that intentionality-of-experience claims are anti-phenomenal is that they were now used against *qualia* view, which shares with the sense-data theory the idea that the phenomenology of experience is irreducible. The main motivation for postulating sense-data had been phenomenological (the phenomenal principle); by contrast, the recognition of the need to account for the phenomenology of experience was missing from most of the "early" intentionality-of-experience claims.

When the phenomenology of experience started to be taken seriously, the view that lobbied in the loudest fashion for phenomenal character was the *qualia* view. The stance it takes towards it, shared with the sense-data theory, is that the phenomenal character is a primitive feature of experience (and intentionality a derived feature).

But there is a significant difference between the “early” intentionality claims, which did not take the phenomenology into account, such as Anscombe’s, and contemporary intentionalism: saying that S’s experience represents an F (when something seems phenomenally F to S) is *explaining* phenomenal character in a certain way; it is *not* denying its existence. Intentionalism acknowledges that there is something it is to undergo the experience and it argues that this feature is exhausted by intentional properties.

Whereas, as I already pointed out several times, the most influential early intentionality claims did not even consider the phenomenology. Because of the sense-data argued the sense-data philosophers, experience has a feature that no thought possesses – sensuous feel. When, against the phenomenal principle, it was argued that what seems F is an intentional object, the idea was that the intentionality of experience is on the same par with that of thought. Anscombe’s account for the intentionality of thought – that intentionality is a grammatical feature – is hardly satisfactory; if extended to experience is even less so: “Nothing needs to be phenomenally F; F is intentionally inexistent”. And if the sense-data philosopher insists: “but what about the sensuousness of it? How can intentionally inexistent things be like this?”, either no further answer is given, or it is said: “it only seems so to you”.

By contrast, this question is more satisfactorily answered by a nowadays intentionalist. She argues that experience has the property of representing F and the account she gives to the property of representing – no matter how reductionist – is also an account of the phenomenal character of experience, of its sensuous feel.

So, the “line” separating intentionalism from the sense-data/*qualia* theories is now to be drawn in terms of what analysis is given to the phenomenal character: in terms of intentional properties or in terms sense-data/*qualia*. This bears on some deep intuitions that philosophers on both sides have about the relationship between the intentional and the phenomenal.

On the side of sense-data/*qualia*, it is thought that these are features independent from each other: phenomenal features have no intrinsic intentionality, and intentional features have not phenomenology. Bodily sensations (pains, itches, etc) have only the former, thoughts have only the latter. Perceptual experience has both, but they are entirely separable into a purely phenomenal ones (sensations) and purely intentional ones (concepts). This view has been called “separatism” [for instance, in Horgan and Tienson 2002].

On the other side, there is the intuition – expressed by the thesis of intentionalism – that there is a necessary connection between intentionality and phenomenal character. Various forms of intentionalism spell differently the sense of the connection. In this chapter, I will look into the way representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism does it. One reason for taking a closer look at it is that they are ways (very different from each other) of making sense of the idea that perceptual experience is essentially intentional,

which concerns the general question of this thesis, and which I reiterated at the beginning of this chapter.

Another reason is to see where exactly to place sense-data in this debate about the relation between the phenomenal and the intentional. Sense-data theory is a relational view about experience and it holds a separatist view about the relationship between the phenomenal and the intentional. Is there a necessary connection between holding one and holding the other? Being a separatist does not seem to be conditioned by commitment to a certain structure of experience – separatism goes well with both a relational view (sense-data theory) and with a non-relational one (*qualia* view). But maybe the reverse is the case? Maybe sense-data theory necessitates separatism? Are the intuitions underlying the phenomenal principle and the transparency argument incompatible with each other?

6.2 Separatism

Intentionality and the phenomenal (or qualitative) have been traditionally treated as separate features, independent from each other: perceptual experience consists of two separable elements: a sensuous core and the concepts under which this is brought. The instantiation of one does not depend on the instantiation of the other – some mental states have only the former, some only the latter. Yet one of them needs the other. Intentionality requires possession of concepts and concepts are acquired through perception. The sensuous core of perceptual experience is not itself intentional, but plays an important role in the acquiring of concepts.

Experience represents the way a painting does: the phenomenal plays the role of the paint, it is the vehicle of the representation, while the concepts provide the content.

The vehicle is a phenomenal feature which, by itself, does not point to anything: sense-data are supposed to have no intrinsic intentionality (they inherited this feature from the *ideas* and *impressions* of Locke, Berkeley and Hume), while *qualia* are intrinsic, qualitative, non-intentional properties of experience.

A dialog between a *qualia* philosopher and an intentionalist is something along the following lines. First, the *qualia* philosopher makes a point like this one:

Think of how things are when you look up at a cloudless sky. Asked, you will say that it is blue. But of course the color word is used here to describe a feature or property *of the sky*, and no one would think otherwise. It is simply bizarre to say that your experience is blue. But then how can you even begin to describe how it is with you when you are seeing the blue sky? Here's how. Concentrate on the nature of your sky-directed experience, taking special care to keep fixed on what is happening to you, whilst ignoring as best you can how things are with the sky. There certainly seems to be something going on in your consciousness something that has various properties. If you doubt this, just imaginatively compare how different these things would be if you were looking at the same sky, but that its color began to change, having been made to glow red by the setting sun. No one could doubt your ability to distinguish the experiences of the two differently colored expanses. And what else could explain this except that the experiences have different properties.⁴

To which the intentionalist would say “yes, indeed, experiences have different *intentional* properties: one experience represents the sky as blue, the other represents it as red.” The *qualia* philosopher would insist:

I think that sensations--almost always--perhaps even always—**have** representational content in addition to their phenomenal character. What's more, I think that it is often the phenomenal character itself that has the representational content. What I deny is that representational content is all there is to phenomenal character. I insist that phenomenal character **outruns** representational content.⁵

According to the *qualia* philosopher, phenomenal character outruns representational content for two reasons. One is that an experience could have exactly the same

⁴ Guttenplan 1995, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Block 1996.

phenomenal character without representing anything: I could enjoy the glowing red like expanse without take it to represent the sky, without taking is to point beyond the pure quality that it is. The other one is that there are phenomenal features that do not represent anything, in any circumstance; they are most likely to be found in bodily sensations, but also in visual experiences, such as afterimages and phosphene-experiences.

6.2.1 Phenomenal Features as Vehicles of Representation

A *qualia* philosopher is committed to the view that experiences represent the way paintings do. *Qualia* are to the experience what the paint is to the painting: the vehicle of representation. In itself, the paint is not of anything. It becomes *of* something due to the painter's intention to depict something; it gets its content from outside and thus becomes a painting. Similarly, the phenomenal features of experience, in themselves, are not of anything; they get their content through relations to conceptual states and/or representational abilities. At the same time, they constitute the essence of conscious experience, so if something seems phenomenally *F* to *S*, that is, if *S*'s experience represents an *F*, it is because, in the first place, it instantiates a certain quality, *Q*.

If something seems phenomenally F to S, experience instantiates quality Q (quale).

It may seem weird to attribute the phenomenal-as-paint view to sense-data theory but not inappropriate, since sense-data theorists would not deny that sense-data represent the world to the subject, although this is not the way they prefer to talk about it.

By not considering at all the phenomenology of experience, an account such as Anscombe's is oblivious to the fact that "there is a difference between the logical features

of intentionality and the psychological reality of mental acts with that feature”, as Robinson points out:

The thought itself [about a unicorn] will, in the standard case and if it is introspectable, have a psychological vehicle. This will probably be verbal, and will involve rehearsing a sentence to oneself; (‘saying in one’s heart’). There is nothing nonexistent about this vehicle; although mental images are, in various ways, problematic, they are not so in the kind of ways that their *objects* are problematic. The image—verbal or otherwise—is not nonexistent, even though what it is of or about is nonexistent. Appeal to intentionality does not, therefore, solve—or, perhaps, even help to solve—any problems there may be about the ontology of the images themselves. One could say that Henry VIII is nonexistent with respect to (in a non-literal sense, exists in) Holbein’s portrait of him, but the pigment of the painting exists in a wholly unproblematic way. The relationship of mental object to psychological vehicle might be conceived of as analogous to this [my underline]. This should lead us to be cautious about attempts to appeal to intentionality to explain the *psychological* reality or the phenomenology of mental states, as opposed to their logical features.⁶

It has been commented that the phenomenal principle was considered so obviously true, that nobody thought it necessary to argue for it⁷. This is not true, actually. In a paper from 1974⁸, H. Robinson argued that F-quality objects (say red afterimages) cannot be intentional objects.

The argument is the following:

- i. It is correct to say that S is aware of an F quality-object whenever S seems to see something.
- ii. The sense or way in which S is aware and the nature of the object are empirical or ‘concrete’ in the way required for a sense-contents theory.
- iii. It is vacuous to take ‘aware’ in this formula as intentional verb.

⁶ Robinson 1994, pp. 164-165.

⁷ Martin *ms.*, Chapter 1.

⁸ Robinson 1974

(i) follows from the possibility of ostensive teaching of the identity of qualities: whenever a person P who is able to recognize and name the quality red rightly believes that S, who is not acquainted with the name for this quality, is seeming to see something with the appropriate quality, P can attempt to teach S the name of the quality, so that S can use it correctly on other occasions.⁹

(ii) is argued for in the following way: “If S is aware of a quality-object F in some area of his visual field, then he cannot be also aware of any other comparable quality on the same line of vision. Thus, if S is aware of a square patch of red in the centre of his field of vision, then he cannot also be aware of a blue patch of similar shape and same or smaller size on the same line of vision.”¹⁰ The quality objects of awareness possess a “blocking function”, therefore they are empirical, not abstract.

And (iii) is held on the grounds that the intentionalist cannot consistently hold to the following:

- 1) S is aware of an F-quality object (follows from (i))
- 2) the F-quality object blocks an area of S’s visual field (follows from (ii))
- 3) the F-quality does not exist.

It can be said that 3) means that there is no particular which is F, but F can also be conceived as a *quale*, therefore instantiated by the experience itself.

⁹ “P can do so only because in such an experience one is acquainted with what the quality is like: and talk of ‘what it is like’ in the case of a quality just is a way of referring to the quality itself.” (Robinson 1974, p. 307)

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 307.

The argument concludes that once 1) and 2) are accepted, 3) cannot be consistently held without having to accept that intentional objects are pretty much like the F-qualities that they are supposed to explain away.¹¹

And here is the corresponding argument – a case for phenomenal character as vehicle – given by a *qualia* theorist: Mere intentional objects do not exist – in virtue of what an experience directed towards a non-existent object has its phenomenal character? This is Block’s reply to the accusation, made by Harman (1990), that the sense-data theory and the *qualia* view fail to distinguish between the properties of representation and the properties of the represented objects:

Harman says that we are only aware of what is represented by our experience, the intentional object of the experience, not what is doing the representing, not the vehicle of representation. But what will Harman say about illusions, cases where the intentional object does not exist? Surely, there can be something in common to a veridical experience of a red tomato and a hallucination of a red tomato, and what is in common can be introspectible. This introspectible commonality cannot be constituted by or explained by the resemblance between something and nothing. It would be better for the representationist to say that what is in common is an intentional content, not an intentional object.¹²

This is an argument (against Harman’s the claim to the contrary) that we are aware of the vehicle of representation:

4. An experience of a red tomato can be phenomenally indistinguishable from a hallucination of a red tomato.
5. The object of a hallucinatory experience does not exist.

¹¹ “That condition 3 is epistemologically idle follows clearly from 1 and 2, as they were explained above. The quality-objects whose involvement in perception was there demonstrated function just like traditional sense-data, with the peculiar *caveat* that they are to be deemed intentionally inexistent. But the simple denial of existence does nothing to raise the ‘veil of perception’ lowered by conditions 1 and 2: if the argument rather like the argument from illusion which was presented above is sound, then our knowledge of the external world will be as dependent upon these intentionally inexistent quality-objects as it is on sense-contents.” (*ibid.*, p. 310).

¹² Block 1996, p. 9.

6. Therefore, the phenomenal character of experience cannot be constituted by the properties of the object of experience.

That the object of experience may not exist and that it can still be with S as if there were an object cannot mean but one thing: S is aware of the property with which experience represents the non-existent object.

I take the idea that the phenomenal is separable from the intentional and constitutes the psychological vehicle for it to be the essence of separatism.¹³

There is one more important aspect here. The following question is legitimate: undoubtedly, concepts are needed for intentionality, but they are acquired from experience and something has to make this possible. Concept possession and phenomenal character may be features independent from each other, but phenomenal character is involved in the acquiring of concepts. After all, the epistemology that originated with the Empiricist tradition is foundational and considers that sensory items are the ultimate bricks at the foundation of knowledge. But then there must be something about the sensory items that enable the acquisition of concepts. Lockean ideas, like sense-data, supposedly do not point beyond themselves; how can they be involved in the acquiring of representations of things in the world? How do they become *of* external things?

A sense-data theorist gives the following answer:

¹³ Here is the way Colin McGinn defines it: “a conception of consciousness that we can call the ‘medium conception’: Consciousness is to its content what a medium of representation is to the message it conveys. Compare sentences, spoken or written. On the one hand, there is their sound or shape (the medium); on the other, their meaning, the proposition they express. We can readily envisage separate studies of these two properties of a sentence, neither presupposing the other. In particular, we could have a theory of the content of sentences that was neutral as to their sound or shape. The meaning could vary while the sound or shape stayed constant, and there could be variations in sound or shape unaccompanied by variations in meaning. Message and medium can vary along independent dimensions. Suppose, then, that we try to think of perceptual experience in this way: Subjective features are analogous to the sound or shape of the sentence, content to its meaning. The content is *expressed* in a particular conscious medium but we can in principle separate the properties of the medium from the message it carries.” (McGinn 1991, pp. 79-80.)

There is, of course, a sense in which sense-data present themselves as individuals, occurring at a certain time and visual place to a certain subject, but the perceiving of things as external physical objects is another matter. In fact Hume has a very straightforward and convincing answer to this. He claims that 'the opinion of the continu'd existence of body depends on the COHERENCE and CONSTANCY of certain impressions...' (1964: 195). This answer to how we come to perceive the world as perceiving particular external objects in no way depends on Hume's scepticism or his phenomenalism. In fact it is easy to see that the presentation of our 'impressions' in a certain kind of ordering is both necessary and sufficient for our seeming to perceive an external world, given our particular rationalizing tendencies.¹⁴

A sense-datum taken in isolation does not represent anything; taken together, sense-data come to represent the external world because of the orderly way they succeed each other.

This ordering is both necessary and sufficient for intentionality.

The *qualia* theorist holds something similar:

The main reason for interpreting our sensations as providing a testimony of the mind-independent world is the highly organised and stable structure of experience, which responds in a uniform and predictable way to our movements and other actions. One seldom reflects upon this fact, but it really is very remarkable. If I only think about my present visual experience of the small coloured icons on my text editor program, it is rather amazing what a fine detail it offers, and how reliably these details seem to hang together.¹⁵

The separatist view is thus the following: Intentional properties and phenomenal ones are features independent from each other; a mental state can have one without the other – phenomenal features without any intentional features, or intentional ones without any phenomenal features. Intentionality is a matter of concept-possession, whereas the phenomenal character of experiencing, say, red is not – the experience can occur independently on whether I have or not the concept *red*. Intentionality depends on possession of concepts, therefore intentionality cannot be used to explain phenomenal

¹⁴ Robinson 2009.

¹⁵ Farkas 2008.

character, which is independent from possession of concepts¹⁶. But the acquisition of concepts depends on a certain condition, which is phenomenal: the coherence and orderly succession of phenomenal features. Perceptual experience is a representation in the sense that the phenomenal provides the vehicle, and the concepts provide the content.

6.3 Phenomenal Features As Essentially Directed

Intentionalism, very generally, is the thesis that any phenomenal feature entails an intentional one. I will not repeat here what I said in Chapter 1 about intentionalism; I will try instead to emphasize in what way, I think, this is a family of views unlike any other.

For one thing, it is expressed by an intentionality claim which not only takes phenomenology into account but actually is a phenomenological thesis. Is it a reductive claim? Insofar as it can be spelled out in various ways, it could be. If the intention is to reduce phenomenal consciousness to intentionality and naturalize the latter, as representationalism does, it surely is.

Is the very general claim that all experiential features are representational, by itself, a threat to views which insist that, in experience, our awareness is in the first place of subjective entities/properties? Speaking about appearances, Martin writes:

For there are many diverse theories of sense perception which seem to be opposed to each other: some concerned with the role of subjective entities or qualities of awareness; others insistent on the role of intentional content or concepts in experience. [...] For some, it is absolutely evident to introspection that we are given something ineffable in experience, beyond words and concepts. For others, it is equally clear to inner inspection that our experience of the world must be representational in character, for it is evident that a mind-independent world is present to us. [...] For in general there has been a tendency to mark two opposing poles within the debate, with some views occupying the extremes, others falling in between. On

¹⁶ An extended argument for the conclusion that the phenomenal and the intentional are separate features (that is, an experience of red cannot be essentially intentional) is given by Robinson (2009).

the one side is the view that experience is entirely subjective in character, that it involves awareness of certain non-physical or mind-dependent entities, sense-data which are not to be identified with objects in the world around us, or the awareness of certain subjective qualities, *qualia* or sensational properties. Such experience is not of a mind-independent world and is not representational in character. At the other end of the pole is the view that our experience is the presentation of a mind-independent world and of nothing else, and that it can be so only in virtue of our experience being representational or intentional in character: like belief or judgement, to experience the world to be a certain way is to take it, or represent it to be that way.¹⁷

From what Martin says, there seems to be a kind of agreement among philosophers over the following:

- intentional content is conceptual, so claims that experience is intentional contain the implicit assumption that experience is conceptual or that concepts play an essential role in experience;
- claims that experience is representational are to be contrasted to claims that experience is awareness of subjective entities and properties;

If there is such an agreement, it can only be conjectural, I would say. It is true that for some philosophers intentionalism is a view that turns phenomenal character into a rather intellectual feature, dependent as it is seen to be on a *propositional* content. It seems that these philosophers deny that we can have perceptual experiences before acquiring concepts; babies, dogs, cats, and great apes have no experiences at all. And it is true that at the opposing poles of the debate on perceptual experience are the views described by Martin.

At the same time, the way he pictures the philosophical scene is profoundly “separatist” in spirit: it “says” that subjective entities and/or properties (responsible for

¹⁷ Martin 2002.

the phenomenal character) are not intentional; on the other hand, if introspection is thought to reveal representational features, this is taken as a sign that no subjective entities/properties are involved and this may sound as a refusal to acknowledge phenomenal character as a feature of experience.

Yet things need not be taken this way; intentionalism can be turned into a reductive account of phenomenal consciousness, as representationalism does, but this is only one side of intentionalism. Since a small minority started to argue that sense can be made of the notion of *phenomenal intentionality* as a basic, primitive feature of the mind, and since some of these philosophers could not care less about the fate of physicalism, it has become clear that there are other reasons to argue for or against *qualia*. I take these reasons to be different intuitions that people have about what the phenomenology of experience shows.

Expressed in a very simplified manner, separatism holds that intentionality is not a feature of experience taken on its own; the phenomenal becomes of external world through the orderly succession of phenomenal features and interpretation. By contrast, intentionalism claims that each phenomenal feature points beyond itself; to an intentionalist, all introspectively available features seem to be properties of external objects.

Next I will consider two forms of intentionalism, different in the extreme: representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism. In what follows, it may look as if I give representationalism a preferential treatment: the section dedicated to it is far more extended and detailed than the one about phenomenal intentionalism. I decided to give a rather disproportionate amount of attention to representationalism for two reasons. One is

that representationalism is a very particular kind of view: it takes all the aspects of consciousness that make it so special and resistant to philosophical reduction and accounts for them in a way that challenges many traditional intuitions. This would be enough reason, I think, to take a closer look at the solutions it proposes. The second reason is that these accounts are worked out in much detail; besides philosophical arguments, representationalism is illustrated with two so called empirical theories. This means that the solutions proposed by representationalism cannot be understood without knowing something about these theories.

6.3.1 Representationalism

Representationalism, or strong intentionalism, analyzes the notion of representation in terms of a natural relation and argues that phenomenal consciousness is a form of representation. The most detailed representationalist theories belong to Michael Tye (1995, 2000) and Fred Dretske (1995); their views are similar in many respects and are said to be “empirical theories”.

The main ideas are the following:

- Intentionality is a sub-class of natural representation, which consists of a certain natural relation – causal covariation – that holds, in normal conditions (specified in a certain way) between representations and what they represent. Both natural things and artifacts can be representations; the relation that constitutes representation holds

naturally in the case of the former, whereas for the latter it holds because they are designed to do so¹⁸.

- Perceptual sensations track physical properties such as colors, shapes, etc. On Tye's version of the theory, visual sensations occur in the following way: the receptor cells of the retina convert light (computation-like) into symbolic representations of light, intensity and wavelength. Further computational procedures on these generate, as output from the visual module, further symbolic representations "of edges, ridges, and surfaces, together with representations of local surface features, for example, color, orientation, and distance away"¹⁹. These representations, claims Tye, "become sensations of edges, ridges, colors, shapes, and so on. Likewise for the other senses".²⁰
- Experience and thought are very different types of representations. Perceptual sensations are non-conceptual representations; they "stand ready to produce conceptual responses via the action of higher-level cognitive processing of one sort or another. So perceptual sensations feed into the conceptual system, without themselves being a part of that system." They are not episodes of *seeing that*, which require concepts, nor are they

¹⁸ The key idea, then, is that representation is a matter of causal covariation or correlation (*tracking*, as I shall often call it) under optimal conditions. If there are no distorting factors, no anomalies or abnormalities, the number of tree rings tracks age, the height of the mercury column tracks temperature, the position of the speedometer needle tracks speed, and so on. Thereby, age, temperature, speed, and the like, are represented. (Tye 1995, p. 119)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* And also: "There is strong evidence that images and visual percepts share a medium that has been called the "visual buffer." This medium is functional: it consists of a large number of cells, each of which is dedicated to representing, when filled, a tiny patch of surface at a particular location in the visual field. For visual percepts and afterimages, the visual buffer is normally filled by processes that operate on information contained in the light striking the eyes. For mental images (other than afterimages), the visual buffer is filled by generational processes that act on information stored in long-term memory about the appearances of objects and their spatial structure." (Tye 1995, p. 120)

seeing-as, which require memory²¹. Tye allows that beliefs and concepts can affect how things are seen – the conceptual processing can feed back into the visual module – but this is not always the case.

Dretske has a similar view about the difference between experience and thought: Experiences are states whose representational properties are phylogenetically determined (therefore fixed) – they were designed (by evolution) to keep track of certain features of the environment. “How things look, sound, and feel at the most basic (phenomenal) level [...] is hard wired”²², and cannot be changed. They are systemic representations. By contrast, beliefs are acquired representations: the way they represent the world is ontogenetically determined – it can be changed through learning.

Conscious representations are only those that serve as input to representations that can modify themselves²³. A thermometer, for instance, is not conscious because it is designed only for hard wired representations; it could be conscious only if it were endowed with the capacity for learning and for modifying its representations accordingly.

- Nothing can look like an elephant to S unless the visual representation is fed into the conceptual module where it can be brought under the concept *elephant*. But the kind of intentionality displayed by sensations is non-conceptual. Sensations are inherently

²¹ “Seeing something as an *F* necessitates remembering what *F*s look like. The perceptual information about *F*s is stored in a schema (on the standard psychological model of perceptual memory). Seeing-as demands bringing the sensory input under the appropriate schema. So seeing-as is constrained by limitations on memory. Perceptual sensations, however, can, and often do, occur without corresponding schemas.” (Tye 1995)

²² Dretske 1995, p. 15.

²³ “They are states whose function is to supply information to a cognitive system for calibration and use in the control and regulation of behavior. Evans expresses a similar idea when he describes internal states whose content depends on their phylogenetically ancient connections with the motor system. In order to qualify as conscious experiences, Evans requires that these content-bearing states serve as input to what he calls a “concept-exercising and reasoning system”. (Dretske 1995, p. 19). Apparently, this is what it means for a state to qualify as conscious: to serve as input to the cognitive system.

directed towards the world because this is what they are: representations. It is part of the theory that for colors and shapes (I will refer only to visual experiences) the categorization is performed mechanically at the level of visual module, therefore no concepts are required for color and shape recognition²⁴.

- The phenomenal character “arises” as output from the sensory modules where the representations of colors, shapes, and edges are processed. It is nothing more and above the content which is the end result of that processing: the representation of the object is outputted from the perceptual module and, when this happens, what we describe as *awareness of the object* of experience takes place.

Phenomenal content, I maintain, is content that is appropriately poised for use by the cognitive system, content that is abstract and nonconceptual. I call this the PANIC theory of phenomenal character: phenomenal character is one and the same as Poised Abstract Nonconceptual Intentional Content.²⁵

It is to be taken literally: *phenomenal character is abstract*²⁶ and *non-conceptual*. This is probably the most blatant blow to the intuition that phenomenal character requires actual instances and it goes with an equally non-intuitive view about introspection: introspection

²⁴ “Nothing looks square to me unless the appropriate processes have operated on the filled cells in the visual buffer and categorized them as representing a square shape. But it is not necessary that I think (or believe) that the object I am seeing is square. Indeed, I need not have any thought (or belief) at all about the real or apparent features of the seen object. In many cases, the descriptive labels utilized in sensory representations do not demand thought or belief. The categorizations are performed mechanically at a nonconceptual level. This is not true for all categorizations involved in experience, of course. One cannot see something as a duck or form an image of an elephant without bringing to bear the pertinent concepts from memory. But it is true for sensory representations of the sort I am concerned with in this chapter.” (Tye 1995)

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁶ “The claim that the contents relevant to phenomenal character must be *abstract* is to be understood as demanding that no particular concrete objects enter into these contents (except for the subjects of experiences in some cases). Since different concrete objects can look or feel exactly alike phenomenally, one can be substituted for the other without any phenomenal change. Which particular object is present, then, does not matter. Nor does it matter if *any* concrete object is present to the subject at all.” (*ibid.*, p. 133)

is not an internal scanning process, something that we may describe more or less metaphorically as “looking inward”; experience itself, a representation that is processed in the perceptual modules, cannot be “scanned”.

Introspection is “a *reliable* process that takes awareness *of* external qualities (in the case of perceptual sensations) as input and yields awareness *that* a certain experience is present as output. It is the reliability of this process that underwrites knowledge of phenomenal character.”²⁷ In introspection we are not aware *of* the experience at all. When we introspect, we activate “the reliable process” which delivers knowledge *that* we have an experience of a certain object.

Against the (separatist) claim that the phenomenal character is the vehicle of experience, representationalism holds that the vehicle of experience is the non-conscious processing taking place in the perceptual modules; the phenomenal character is the content itself, which is the physical properties represented. The extent to which the view is stretching intuitions to the limit is obvious. How can phenomenal character be identical with the content, since the content is something abstract, presumably a proposition? It can, according to representationalism, and it is. Phenomenal consciousness, for all its vividness, is actually something abstract, albeit not a proposition but a complex of physical properties²⁸.

As I understand it, it is not that representationalism does not take the phenomenal character into account for what it *seems* to us to be, because it certainly does. I see it as

²⁷ Tye 2000, p. 52.

²⁸ Here’s Dretske: “In hallucinating pink rats we are aware of something--the properties, pink and rat-shaped that something is represented as having--but we are not aware of any object that has these properties--a pink, rat-shaped, object. We are aware of pure universals, uninstantiated properties.” (Dretske 1993)

trying to “convince” us its *seeming* that way to us should not lead us into believing that a certain property is instantiated.

One of the critiques formulated by representationalists against the sense-data and *qualia* theories is that they confuse the properties of the represented objects with the properties of representation²⁹. When having a red afterimage, representationalists say, I am aware of what my experience represents – a red inexistent surface, not of my experience, which has very different properties. This is usually illustrated with examples of common (mis)representations: speedometers, thermometers, paintings, etc. – all have different properties than what they represent.³⁰ It is interesting that to representationalists it does not seem at all strange to claim that experience is a representation like any other given what is the case with any other representation: it presents the content together with the vehicle (we are aware of what it represents by being aware of the vehicle of

²⁹ See Harman (above, the discussion with Block), or Dretske: “It is important to distinguish the property an object is represented as having (call this M) and the property of representing an object to be M, call this M_r. If a perceptual experience represents an object to be moving, M, then, if the representation is veridical, it is the object that is M while the experience is M_r. If *qualia* are properties one is aware of in having perceptual experiences--the properties objects (if there are any) phenomenally *seem* to have--then it is M, movement, a property (if the experience is veridical) of the object experienced, not M_r, a property of the experience, that is the quale.” (Dretske 1993)

³⁰ “This intentional aspect of representation is evident in even such familiar measuring instruments as speedometers. Nothing need be going 100 mph for my (malfunctioning) speedometer to represent me as going that fast. Even when the representation is veridical, it (the representation) need not have the properties it says the vehicle has. Ordinarily, of course, a speedometer (located in the car whose speed it represents) has the same speed it represents the car as having, but the police have stationary devices that can represent a car as going 100 mph. According to a representational theory, experiences are like that. The representational vehicle, the thing in your head, doesn't (or needn't) have the properties it represents the world as having. The thing in your head that represents the object out there as moving needn't itself be moving. That is why looking in a person's (or bat's) head won't reveal the qualities being experienced by the person (bat) in whose head one looks. What I experience (see) when I look in another person's head are the representational vehicles--electrical-chemical events in gray, soggy, brain stuff; what the person experiences (sees), on the other hand, is representational content--a bright orange pumpkin.” (Dretske, 1995)

representation). Mental representation seems to be the only exception, yet this does not seem to make it ‘special’ in any sense.³¹

6.3.2 Phenomenal Intentionalism

One thing, though, on which representationalism agrees with separatism is that there is no phenomenology associated with thoughts³². Phenomenal intentionalism, on the other hand, is the conjunction of two claims: that the states traditionally considered purely intentional – thoughts – have phenomenal character & states usually seen as purely phenomenal – bodily sensations, moods – have also intentional features.

The claim has been argued for, independently, by several philosophers; it is based on the intuition that the basis for intentionality is phenomenal: “There is a kind of intentionality, pervasive in human mental life, that is constitutively determined by phenomenology alone”³³.

There are many and varied reasons for holding such a view; some of them are indifferent towards physicalism and attempts to naturalize the mind, others are engaged

³¹ This is noticed by Seager: “According to the theory, there is nothing mysterious about the way that brain states represent – they get to be representations in fundamentally the same way that speedometers or beedances do [...]. However, the combination of the ideas that brain states are ‘normal’ representations and that we are aware of what these states represent is deeply mysterious. For it is obviously true that we come to know what a particular normal representation represents by being aware of (some of) the non-representational properties of that representation. When I become aware that a picture is representing a certain kind of scene this is because I am aware of the properties of the picture itself, its panoply of colors, shapes, textures. [...] We can also describe this problem in terms of a distinction between the *content* and the *vehicles* of representations. [...] In these terms, the problem is to account for the fact that in consciousness we are aware of the content of representations *without* being aware of their vehicles.” (Seager 1999, pp. 175-176)

³² Tye 1995, again: “The PANIC theory entails that no belief could have phenomenal character. A content is classified as phenomenal only if it is nonconceptual and poised. Beliefs are not nonconceptual, and they are not appropriately poised. They lie within the cognitive system, rather than providing inputs to it. Beliefs are not sensory representations at all.”

³³ Horgan and Tienson 2002.

in a project aiming to explain intentionality in terms of consciousness and to naturalize consciousness. None of them is important here. What is important is that all these philosophers share the intuition that content and phenomenal character cannot be separated from each other:

Thus perceptual experiences are Janus-faced: They point outward to the external world but they also present a subjective face to their subject; they are of something other than the subject and they are like something for the subject. But these two faces do not wear different expressions: for what the experience is like is a function of what it is of, and what it is of is a function of what it is like. Told that an experience is as of a scarlet sphere you know what it is like to have it; and if you know what it is like to have it, then you know how it represents things. The two faces are, as it were, locked together. The subjective and the semantic are chained to each other.³⁴

Intentionality is a property that a sensation (say of red) has essentially. The intentionality of such experience is thought to be constituted by an intrinsic property of experience: its phenomenal character. That is to say, phenomenal character is an intrinsic property of the conscious subject and it is essentially directed. It constitutes content, *phenomenal content*, which is the basic brick of intentionality. Simply put it, it is the idea that I cannot have an experience which does not seem to me to be *of* something. I already examined this claim in Chapter 1, so I will not insist on it now.

An alternative way of expressing it is that experience is assessable for accuracy: phenomenal character is such that it ‘says’ what it has to be the case in my environment for my experience to be accurate. This is, for instance, the way Charles Siewert defines it:

On my view, it is sufficient for a feature to be intentional, that it be one in virtue of which its possessor is assessable for truth or accuracy (as explained above in 6.2). The way this works in the case of vision is this. I may attribute to myself a

³⁴ McGinn 1991, pp. 76-77.

certain feature by saying that it *looks* to me as if something is the case. Such statements can be understood as the attribution of intentional features, because, for example, when it looks to me as if there is something X-shaped in a certain place, then there is some condition C such that if it looks this way to me and C obtains, it follows that the way it looks to me is accurate. That condition is: there is something X-shaped in that place.³⁵

A representationalist would say the same; insofar as the claim is that phenomenal character is essentially intentional, the views are the same. But the claim is backed up in radically different ways. Representationalism is an externalist theory; it reduces phenomenal character to a representation whose content is externally determined. Phenomenal intentionalism is internalist; the accuracy conditions of experience are said to be internally determined. It argues that a BIV could have experiences directed exactly the same way as ours.³⁶

6.4 Separatism vs. Intentionalism Concluded

In order to summarize the main point of disagreement between separatism and intentionalism, I need one more element. Separatism needs something to make the connection between the phenomenal and the intentional. That element is said to be the orderly nature of the succession of phenomenal features. Since it is phenomenal and provides necessary and sufficient conditions for intentionality, I will call it “phenomenal

³⁵ Siewert 1998, p. 220.

³⁶ “In abstraction from any theoretical considerations, this claim is very intuitive: it just seems that what it is like for a person to undergo a certain experience, though perhaps *causally* dependent upon external affairs, is not *constitutively* dependent on them. This intuition is brought out vividly when we consider Cartesian demon and brain-in-vat scenarios (Horgan et. al. 2004). It seems that a brain-in-vat duplicate of you should have the same phenomenal experiences as you. If so, non-relational duplicates are also phenomenal duplicates. To abstract from immaterial complications to do with vats and their operation, we may consider an otherwise disembodied brain, or for that matter a soul, floating through otherwise empty space but (by sheer luck) undergoing conscious experiences that are phenomenally indistinguishable from yours. Since there is nothing for this ‘space soul’ to bear relations to, it would seem that the phenomenal character of its experiences is a non-relational property (Kriegel 2007, p. 321)

directedness”. I do not think that a separatist would accept the label, but I need a common denominator in order to compare these two views:

For intentionalism, phenomenal directedness constitutes genuine intentionality and is a feature of atomic experiences; for separatism it is just a condition for intentionality (albeit a necessary and sufficient condition) but not itself intentionality, and a feature of the phenomenal as a whole.

The dispute is over two things: what to call intentionality and what the correct analysis of “Something seems phenomenally F to S” is. Insofar as separatism is concerned, the analysis of “something seems phenomenally F to S” should not bring in intentionality at all. For intentionalism, the analysis is in terms of intentionality: *If something seems phenomenally F to S, S’s experience represents F.*

6.4.1 Is the Sense-Data Theory Compatible with Intentionalism?

The main point that I want to make in this chapter is that there has been a shift in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience: from claiming that the immediate object of experience may not exist to claiming that, phenomenally, experience is essentially directed to things external to it. The former is a claim about the structure of experience; the latter is a claim about the phenomenal character of experience. The question is now: how radical is this shift? So radical that it allows intentionalism to be compatible with the sense-data theory? Can you be a sense-data theorist *and* an intentionalist?

The sense-data theory is defined by two elements: relational structure of experience and separatism about intentionality. The early intentionality-of-experience

claims were directed against the relational view (the phenomenal principle), while what is under attack nowadays is the separatist view.

Separatism clearly does not require a certain view about the structure of experience since it is endorsed by both a relational view (sense-data) and by a non-relational one (*qualia*). But is not clear whether the relational view requires separatism; it may be that being a sense-data theorist leaves you with no other choice but separatism. But is this actually the case? Is the intentionalist attack against separatism also a threat to the relational view? That is, is the intentionalist thesis incompatible with the Phenomenal Principle? At first glance, the answer seems to be “yes”. From the conjunction of

If something seems phenomenally F to S, there is something F

and

If something seems phenomenally F to S, what is F is an intentional object.

it follows that *If something seems phenomenally F to S, there is something F, and it is an intentional object.*

There are some hidden ambiguities here. One flows from the notion of *intentional object*. An intentional object is (what an intentional state is directed at) & (possibly non-existent). But ‘possibly non-existent’ does not mean ‘non-existent’. It is not as if all intentional objects are non-existent; if it were so, no thoughts about existing individuals could be called “intentional states”. What matters for an F to qualify as an intentional object is that S takes her experience to be of an F and sense-data clearly qualify.

The problem is rather the status of the sense-data: an intentional object, on most accounts, is transcendent to the state, or independent from it, and this is the condition that sense-data do not satisfy. Not all accounts have this requirement. For instance, Alex

Byrne's, who gives a formulation of the thesis of intentionalism and an argument for it, believes that sense-data can satisfy them³⁷.

But all these are beside the point I want to make. Inquiring about the compatibility between the sense-data theory and intentionalism is *not* asking whether sense-data can be intentional objects. It is asking whether sense-data can provide an analysis of the intentional object of perceptual experience. This may sound silly: of course they can and they actually do. But what I'm asking is whether the sense-data theorist can have the option of saying that sense-data *do* have intrinsic intentionality and that, for instance, a red sense-datum is *essentially* about external red. This is the hypothesis that I want to consider. It may sound eccentric, but maybe it is not. After all, it is a sense-data theorist who recognizes that the British Empiricists failed to notice the importance of a general question – 'What is involved in an idea's being an idea *of* something?' – as well as that of the particular question of whether perceptual ideas are of something³⁸.

If what I'm saying makes sense, the conjunction of the phenomenal principle and the intentionalist thesis is not a contradiction:

(P) If it seems to S that something (from her environment) is F, there really is something (a sense-datum) which is F.

(I) If it seems to S that something (from her environment) is F, what seems to be F (in her environment) is an intentional object (may not exist).

Intentionalism takes phenomenal directedness to constitute genuine intentionality and be an essential feature of atomic experiences. While not denying that such a

³⁷ Alex Byrne 2001.

³⁸ Robinson 1994, p. 13.

directedness is needed, separatism considers it to be something arising from the orderly nature of the phenomenal. I want to consider briefly whether this can be a knock-down argument against intentionalism.

I imagine that the argument is something along these lines: at any given moment we have countless experiences, in all sensory modalities, and these experiences are connected with each other in a particularly ordered and coherent manner. Alternatively, we can say that at any given moment we have one experience with countless phenomenal features combined in a certain way, which is orderly and coherent. But it is not as if the experience lasts for an instant and then disappears, being replaced by a black-out; we have such experiences at every instant, continuously, and they are all held together by temporal constancy and continuity.

Order, coherence, temporal constancy, and continuity keep together all phenomenal features and give them the characteristic of a continuous experiential flux. All of them are necessary for phenomenal features to come to point beyond themselves. If one of these four is missing, we don't take the whole of our experiences to be of the external world:

To see that the ordering is necessary, imagine experiences with the same sensible qualities as ours – colours, shapes, sounds etc – but in a complete jumble. There could be no inclination to construe these as manifesting any objectivity. They would just be like peculiar subjective sensations. The same would apply if we considered one experience on its own. Imagine a normally blind person who happened to have a single, very brief visual experience qualitatively just like your current view of your room, but with absolutely no reason to connect it with any other of his experiences. Again, there would be nothing about it to make it seem anything other than a strange kind of 'feeling'.³⁹

³⁹ Robinson 2009.

The question is now, even assuming the coherence of the totality of experience, whether this is enough reason for concluding that atomic phenomenal features are not intrinsically directed. What I mean is the following: what makes this coherence be *of* the external world? Why do we take the constant and coherent flow of phenomenal features to be of something objective? Couldn't the registration of the constant, coherent flow be just what it is without conjuring up anything to us?

Robinson claims that an incoherent phenomenology would give rise to 'no inclination to construe these as manifesting any objectivity'. So, there is something else, apart from the coherence: an inclination to construe it in a certain way. If the phenomenology is incoherent, there is no inclination to construe it as directedness towards the world.

Therefore, if there is inclination to construe the phenomenology as directedness towards the world, the phenomenology is coherent. The coherence is a necessary condition for the inclination. But is it sufficient, too? If it were, the following would be true: If the phenomenology is coherent, there is inclination to construe the phenomenology as directedness towards the world.

Yet this does not strike me at all as being so. It seems to me that the coherence of the phenomenal does not guarantee the inclination to take the phenomenology as directed towards the world. I would rather say that there must be something about these phenomenological features that, when coherently together, trigger the inclination.

It seems to me that infants do show inclination to take individual phenomenal features as things from their environment. It is individual features, such as colors, shapes, movements, noises that catch a baby's attention, so it seems to me more plausibly that

she reacts to atomic phenomenal features. They are detected against a coherent background, for sure, but does this mean that the directedness of atomic phenomenal features is derived from the directedness of the whole? (What kind of derivation would that be? Inference?) It seems to me more plausible that atomic phenomenal features have “in-built” directedness.

Besides, that a baby has an ‘inclination to construe these as manifesting any objectivity’ is an assumption too intellectual. In the absence of most if not all concepts, how can anything be a manifestation of objectivity? Objectivity is a notion that is arrived at as the cognitive capacities are exercised and concepts acquired.

I am not interested in constructing an argument against separatism, just to see if and how it can be resisted. And it certainly seems that it can be resisted, so I think the real reason for a sense-data theorist to endorse it must simply be that she does not have the intuition that all phenomenal features are directed towards things and properties from the environment.

Arguments from introspection have always played an important role in the philosophy of perception; a theory of perception, it is assumed, must conform to what experience seems to us, that is, it has to satisfy the so-called principle of phenomenal adequacy. It’s just that it has been notoriously hard to do that in a consistent way. Especially when philosophers have different intuitions about what should be considered obvious from introspection.⁴⁰

The intuition that atomic phenomenal features are essentially directed plays the central role in one of the most notorious arguments in the philosophy of perception, the argument from transparency. Despite its notoriety (or because of it), it is not clear what

⁴⁰ Martin (*ms.*) Chapter 1.

the transparency argument is. That are several formulations of it and there is more than just one transparency argument. Or so I shall argue in the next chapter.

7 The Transparency Argument

7.1 *What I experience vs. How I experience*

First, I need to make some terminological points, to determine what exactly introspection is supposed to show. Experiences are Janus-faced, as McGinn said. That is, they are double sided: they put us in contact with things in the world, or (re)present external things to us (I mean it in the most general way such that nobody would deny it, no matter what their preferred theory of perception is) and they have phenomenal characters (it is like something it is to have them).

The visual experience that I have now does two things at once: (a) it puts me in contact with a red tomato on the table, and (b) it makes it be like something to have it. (a) says *what* I experience – what the [external] object of experience is. (b) says *how* I experience – how it is with me.

I will express (a) with “I experience a red tomato on the table” and (b) with “I have P”.

(a) is equivalent with “there seems to be a red tomato on the table”.

Different theories of perception argue over what the correct analysis of (a) is. The ones I have discussed all along are the following:

- If I experience a red tomato on the table, there is a red and bulgy mind-dependent particular [which represents a red tomato] (sense-data theory); (i)
- If I experience a red tomato on the table, my experience instantiates certain properties [which represents a red tomato] (*qualia* view); (ii)

- If I experience a red tomato on the table, my experience represents a red tomato on the table (intentionalism). (iii)

I will also add disjunctivism (although I have not said almost anything about it):

- If I experience a red tomato on the table, either my experience is a direct awareness of a red tomato on the table, or it represents a red tomato on the table. (iv)

The square brackets in the first two conditionals are meant to single out the separatism expressed by those views: experience is not essentially intentional.

If I am interested in *what* I experience [that is, (a)], I describe it the following way”

“I experience *red* at location x” (“there seems to be something red at location x”);

“I experience a *bulgy shape* at location x”;

“I experience a *bulgy-shaped surface* at location x”;

“I experience something *red* before my eyes” (an afterimage);

“I experience *floating specks* before my eyes”.

“I experience *rays* shooting from the light”;

“I experience a *blurred print*”;

In introspection, I switch focus from (a) to (b), from *what* to *how*. Describing experiences phenomenally is describing their phenomenal character, that is, it is describing the way it is with me when undergoing those experiences: “I have P_1 ” (“it is with me like *this₁*”), “I have P_2 ” (“it is with me like *this₂*”), etc.

The relevance of introspection is supposed to be the following: when I concentrate on *how* I experience (as opposed to *what* I experience), I am trying to bracket

the world (the *what*), that is, I am trying to describe *how* I experience in a way that is not dependent on the concepts which I use when I describe *what* I experience. The way it strikes me when I concentrate on *how* I experience is supposed to unravel the “true” nature of experience.

Intentionalism claims that introspection shows that we cannot describe *how* we experience except in terms of *what* we experience, no matter how hard we try to bracket the world:

“it is with me as if there is a *red tomato* at location x” (or “I experience as if there is a *red tomato* at location x”)

“it is with me as if there is a *bulgy shape* at location x”;

“it is with me as if there is a *bulgy-shaped surface* at location x”;

“it is with me as if there is something *red* before my eyes” (an afterimage);

“it is with me as if there are *floating specks* before my eyes”.

“it is with me as if *rays* are shooting from the light”.

This shows that phenomenal characters are intentional properties.

7.2 The Transparency Argument

The transparency argument is an argument from introspection that supposedly shows that all phenomenal features are intentional. My goal in this chapter is two-folded: to have a closer look at the transparency argument and to see whether sense-data is compatible with transparency or not.

7.2.1 Transparency and Representationalism

The claim that perceptual experience is transparent was initially directed against the *qualia* view. There are several formulations of the argument; Harman's and Tye's are probably the most quoted:

When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she experience any feature of anything as intrinsic features of her experience. And this is true of you too. There is nothing special about Eloise's visual experience. When you see a tree, you do not experience any features as intrinsic features of your experience. Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree 'from here'.¹

*

Standing on the beach in Santa Barbara a couple of summers ago on a bright sunny day, I found myself transfixed by the intense blue of the Pacific Ocean. Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn't this show that there are visual *qualia*?

I am not convinced. It seems to me that what I found so pleasing in the above instance, what I was focusing on, as it were, were a certain shade and intensity of the color blue. I experienced blue as a property of the ocean not as a property of my experience. My experience itself certainly wasn't blue. Rather it was an experience that represented the ocean as blue. What I was really delighted in, then, were specific aspects of the content of my experience. It was the content, not anything else, that was immediately accessible to my consciousness and that had aspects I found so pleasing. [...] This point, I might note, seems to be the sort of thing that G. E. Moore had in mind when he remarked that the sensation of blue is diaphanous. [...] When one tries to focus on it in introspection one cannot help but see right through it so that one actually ends up attending to is the real color blue.²

Both passages reveal a common focus – whether intrinsic properties of experience are revealed in introspection – yet the argument differs in scope. In that same paper, Harman makes it clear that the argument is also directed against sense-data, while Tye gives hints

¹ Harman 1990, p. 48.

² Tye, 'Visual *Qualia* and Visual Content', p. 160.

even in this passage that a sense-data theorist (Moore) might have endorsed the argument. In a subsequent paper, which I will also discuss, he argues that transparency is compatible with the sense-data theory.

The point of the transparency argument is that all phenomenal characters are experienced as properties of external object(s), therefore they are intentional properties. The argument is the following:

- (1) All phenomenal characters *are experienced as* properties of the objects of experience.
- (2) No phenomenal character *is experienced as* an intrinsic property of experience.

“[...] the colors she [Eloise] experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings”.

and:

“None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience”; “I experienced blue as a property of the ocean not as a property of my experience”.

I concentrate on the objects from my immediate surrounding; I attended to them and their properties. Then I switch attention towards the experience. Nothing changes: I am still attending to those objects and their properties. So, experience is transparent: everything is experienced as properties of external objects.

If what I said in the previous chapter is correct, representationalism is a stronger thesis. I take it that it uses transparency to back up a much stronger pair of claims:

- (3) All phenomenal characters *are* properties of the objects of experience.

(4) No phenomenal character *is* an intrinsic property of experience.

Tye makes the step from (1)-(2) to (3)-(4) with a theory that argues that phenomenal character is PANIC (Poised Abstract Nonconceptual Intentional Content). From the way things are experienced it is inferred that they *are* actually that way: *If a phenomenal character is experienced as F, the phenomenal character is F.*

It can be reformulated as

(R) Phenomenal characters are external properties.

This is a metaphysical thesis that claims the identity between phenomenal characters and external properties.

7.2.2 Transparency and Sense-Data

The transparency argument, though, is (1)-(2) not (3)-(4). It is explicitly an argument against *qualia*. Is it an argument against sense-data too? Some philosophers think so. Representationalists are not the only philosophers to use it. M. G. F. Martin, who is a disjunctivist, also does. Here's his famous "lavender bush" version:

When I stare at the straggling lavender bush at the end of my street, I can attend to the variegated colors and shapes of leaves and branches, and over time I may notice how they alter with the seasons. But I can also reflect on what it is like for me now to be staring at the bush, and in doing so I can reflect on particular aspects of the visual situation: for example that at this distance of fifty meters the bush appears more flattened than the rose bush which forms the boundary of my house with the street. When my attention is directed out at the world, the lavender bush and its features occupy center stage. It is also notable that when my attention is turned inwards instead, to my experience, the bush is not replaced by some other entity belonging to the inner realm of the mind in contrast to the dilapidated street in which I live.[my underline] I attend to what it is like for me to inspect the lavender bush through perceptually attending to the bush itself while at the same time reflecting on what I am doing. So, it does not seem to me as if there is any object apart from the bush for me to be attending to or reflecting on while doing this.

Introspection of one's perceptual experience reveals only the mind-independent objects, qualities and relations that one learns about through perception. The

claim is that one's experience is, so to speak, diaphanous or transparent to the objects of perception, at least as revealed by introspection.³

This is an argument against both sense-data and *qualia*: by switching back and forth from the lavender bush to my experience of it, I am aware only of the bush, its features, its relations to all surrounding things. The external world itself reveals to me in experience without any intermediary.

Yet Tye thinks differently. He believes that a sense-data theorist can endorse transparency. He argues the following way⁴:

- 5 “Focus your attention on the scene before your eyes and on how things *look* to you. You see various objects; and you see these objects by seeing their facing surfaces. [...] In seeing these surfaces, you are immediately and directly aware of a whole host of qualities. [...] you experience them as being qualities of the surfaces. None of the qualities of which you are directly aware in seeing the various surfaces look to you to be qualities of your experience. You do not experience any of these qualities as qualities of your experience. For example, if blueness is one of the qualities and roundness another, you do not experience your experience as blue or round.”
- 6 “To suppose that the qualities of which perceivers are directly aware in undergoing ordinary, everyday visual experiences are really qualities of the experiences would be to convict such experiences of massive error. That is just not credible.”
- 7 Therefore, “the qualities of which you are directly aware in focusing on the scene before your eyes *and* how things look are not qualities of your visual experience.”

³ Martin 2002.

⁴ Tye 2000.

- 8 “If you are attending to how things *look* to you, as opposed to how they are independent of how they look, you are bringing to bear your faculty of introspection. But in doing so, you are not aware of any inner object or thing. The only objects of which you are aware are the external ones making up the scene before your eyes. Nor, to repeat, are you directly aware of any qualities of your experience.”
- 9 “Your experience is thus transparent to you”.
- 10 “When you introspect, you are certainly aware of the phenomenal character of your experience. [...] Via introspection, you are directly aware of a range of qualities that you experience as being qualities of surfaces at varying distances away and orientations *and thereby* you are aware of the phenomenal character of your experience.”
- 11 “Therefore, your awareness of phenomenal character is not the direct awareness of a quality of your experience. Relatedly, the phenomenal character itself is not a quality of your experience to which you have direct access.”

The two arguments (Martin’s and Tye’s) share two claims:

- A) When changing the focus of attention (outside → inside), phenomenally *everything stays the same*. I experience in the same way.
- B) Phenomenally nothing seems to be a property of experience.

But there are some important differences: Martin is particularly interested in reaching a conclusion about the entities we are aware of, and the conclusion is that they are external, mind-dependent objects/properties. Whereas Tye’s main interest is to reach

a conclusion about the phenomenal character of experience. He pauses on every element of what he experiences: he experiences surfaces of objects and their qualities (shapes and colors), and the awareness of them is immediate. Their properties are not experienced as properties of experience: “if blueness is one of the qualities and roundness another, you do not experience your experience as blue or round”. No inner object is experienced. Tye thinks that a sense-data philosopher can reach the same conclusion⁵, and it is of no wonder that he thinks so. He is referring to Moore, who argued for the act-object model of experience. That you do not experience blue as a property of experience is another point of Moore’s. Tye’s is an argument against *qualia* and it is different from Martin’s and also from Harman’s.

The arguments put different emphases on what the transparency is supposed to show:

Martin and Harman focus on the idea that it is the external world that presents itself to us when concentrating on (a) (*what* we experience) and that when we switch focus to (b) (*how* we experience) nothing changes, therefore, they say, there are no reasons to postulate mental particular and properties to account for *what* we experience.

Tye is more interested in accounting for *how* we experience, that is, in giving an analysis of the phenomenal character.

7.2.3 Back to Where It All Began: Moore

⁵ “This conclusion is one that the sense-datum theorists would have endorsed. Sense-datum theorists were at pains to distinguish the act of sensing from the thing sensed and they insisted that the qualities of which we are directly and immediately aware are qualities of the latter, specifically, an immaterial surface or sense-datum. Thus, it should not come as a surprise to find G. E. Moore, one of the chief advocates of the sense-datum theory, drawing our attention to the phenomenon of transparency.” (Tye 2000)

There is a huge literature on G. E. Moore's paper 'The Refutation of Idealism', where he comments upon the transparency of experience. Many things have been said about this paper: that it gives transparency as an argument for Moore's version of sense-data theory⁶, that it draws attention to transparency, but it is unclear whether Moore endorses it or not⁷, etc., etc.

So, what is transparency for Moore and what role does it play (if any) in his?

A close look at his paper reveals that the "(in)famous" transparency comment is an explanation for the failure of philosophers to realize that experience has an act-object structure. The (abbreviated) argument for the act-object structure of experience is the following:

12 The sensation of blue differs from the sensation of green (Moore said it is obvious.

We can suppose that his reason for claiming so was phenomenological).

13 Both are sensations, therefore they have something in common, something that makes them both sensations or mental facts – consciousness.

14 Therefore, every sensation consists of 2 elements: something which is the same in all sensations – consciousness – and something which makes one sensation differ from another – the object of sensation.

15 Therefore, assertion that "blue" exists, assertion that "consciousness" exists and assertion that both 'blue' and 'consciousness' exist are different assertions.

16 Therefore, "if anyone tells us that to say 'Blue exists' is the same thing as to say that 'Both blue and consciousness exists' [sensation of blue], he makes a mistake and a self-contradictory mistake." Saying that "blue" and "sensation of blue" refer to the

⁶ Kind 2003.

⁷ Tye 2000.

same thing is to commit the fallacy of identifying one of the parts with the whole or that of identifying one of the parts with the other. Blue is *what is experienced*, the sensation of blue is *the experience of it*.

The error of identifying experience with its object is easy to make, says Moore, given that it is very hard to attend to consciousness: you attend to the experience and end up with noticing its object; hence you may think that experience just consists of the object.

[...] there is a very good reason why they should have supposed so, in the fact that when we refer to introspection and try to discover what the sensation of blue is, it is very easy to suppose that we have before us only a single term. The term 'blue' is easy enough to distinguish, but the other element which I have called 'consciousness' – that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green – is extremely difficult to fix. That many people fail to distinguish it at all is sufficiently shown by the fact that there are materialists. And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent – we look through it and see nothing but blue; we may be convinced that there is something but what it is no philosopher, I think, has yet clearly recognized.⁸

It turns out that the famous comment about transparency is made as an explanation for an “error”: we cannot identify the mental component of a sensation because “it seems to be transparent”.

Having shown that experience consists of two elements, consciousness and blue, the next step is to establish the relation between them. Moore argues that the relation between consciousness and blue is that between knowledge and what is known, and *not the one between a thing and its quality*.⁹

⁸ Moore 1922.

⁹ The ‘sensation of blue’, on this view [which he considers wrong], differs from a blue bead or a blue beard in exactly the same way in which the two latter differ from one another: the blue bead differs from the blue beard in that while the former contains glass, the latter contains hair; and the

In having a sensation of blue, says Moore, consciousness does not become blue, (and even if it were, blue would bear an extra relation to consciousness: that between thing known and the knowing of it). Nowadays this would be the equivalent of an argument from introspection against *qualia*: that of which I am aware, blue, does not seem to be a property of consciousness, it seems to be transcendent to consciousness. Introspection does not allow me to say with certainty whether that which is “before the mind” is or not a property of consciousness; introspection does allow me to say that it is an object of consciousness. This is an argument from introspection that experience is relational.

The claim from introspection here is: *I experience blue as an object of my experience*:

It is possible, I admit, that my awareness is blue *as well as* being *of* blue: but what I am quite sure of is that it is *of* blue; that it has to blue the simple and unique relation the existence of which alone justifies us in distinguishing knowledge of a thing from the thing known, indeed in distinguishing mind from matter. And this result I may express by saying that what is called the *content* of sensation is in very truth what I originally called it – the sensation’s *object*.¹⁰

Yet Moore does not endorse transparency: “When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. Yet it can be distinguished if we look enough, and if we know that there is something to look for.”

Tye seems to believe that his argument has two introspective claims in common with Moore’s: that introspection does not reveal any property of experience

‘sensation of blue’ differs from both in that, instead of glass or hair, it contains consciousness. The relation of the blue to the consciousness is conceived to be exactly the same as that of the blue to the glass or hair: it is in all three cases the *quality* of a *thing*. [...] Any sensation or idea is a ‘thing’ and what I have called its object is the quality of this thing.” (*ibid.*)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

(“consciousness” in Moore’s case), and that introspection reveals what is transcendent to consciousness – its objects. But Moore does not exclude the possibility that “blue” is also a quality of experience; he just says that introspection is of no help in this respect. It is as if he acknowledges that introspection is reliable for certain purposes (if something is experienced as an object of experience, it is an object of experience) and not that much for others. “Introspection does not allow me to say with certainty whether that which is “before the mind” is or not a property of consciousness”, although it does allow me to say that it is an object of consciousness. This seems to leave open the following possibility: that (a property of) consciousness is experienced as an object of consciousness (and this possibility proves useful to the phenomenal intentionalist).

Tye thinks that a sense-data theorist could endorse *his* transparency argument. But sense-data theory being undesirable for “a whole host of reasons”, says Tye, “we don’t need to accept it. The best hypothesis is that visual phenomenological character is representational content of a certain sort – content into which certain external qualities enter.”¹¹

Tye’s comments about what a sense-data theorist could hold in common with a representationalist are important because they reveal a common intuition between two otherwise different theories: the quasi-presentational aspect of experience. Phenomenal characters are experienced as properties of objects.

7.2.4 Transparency and Phenomenal Intentionalism

Phenomenal intentionalism too uses the transparency argument:

¹¹ Tye 2000.

This fact about visual experience has been appreciated quite often over the past couple of decades. It is basically the point often referred to in the relevant literature as the ‘transparency of experience’ (Harman 1990). The idea is that whenever we try to introspect the qualities of our conscious experiences, we manage only to become aware of the properties of what these are experiences *of*. This suggests that the phenomenal character of our conscious experiences is intentional.¹²

Now, despite the shared commitment to the intentionalist thesis (all phenomenal characters are intentional properties), representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism are very different views, as the discussion from the previous chapter shows (I hope).

Representationalist is committed to:

- (5) All phenomenal characters *are* properties of the objects of experience.
- (6) No phenomenal character *is* an intrinsic property of experience.

Whereas phenomenal intentionalism is committed to the more general pair of claims which constitute the transparency argument:

- (1) All phenomenal characters *are experienced as* properties of the objects of experience.
- (2) No phenomenal character *is experienced as* an intrinsic property of experience.

Representationalism holds that when something seems F, a physical property is available to S, whereas on the account given by phenomenal intentionalism an intrinsic property of S is what constitutes the “seeming” or what has the intentional property.

According to representationalism, when S introspects, she gets direct access to a physical property F. Whereas according to phenomenal intentionalism, the object of her second order (introspective) state is something mental: an intrinsic property of S’s

¹² Kriegel 2007, pp. 320-321.

experience, which has the essential property of representing F, therefore is always experienced *as* F.

Phenomenal intentionalism uses (1)-(2) for a completely different conclusion. It starts out with an intuition – that the phenomenal character is an intrinsic property of experience which is intrinsically directed – and uses (1)-(2) to argue for it.

According to (3)-(4), none of the phenomenal characters is a property of experience/representation; all phenomenal characters are properties of the object of experience/representation, as Harman says:

Eloise is aware of a tree as a tree she is now seeing. So, we can suppose she is aware of some features of her current visual experience. In particular, she is aware that her visual experience has the feature of being an experience of seeing a tree. That is to be aware of an intentional feature of her experience; she is aware that her experience has a certain content. On the other hand, I want to argue that she is not aware of those intrinsic features of her experience by virtue of which it has that content. Indeed, I believe that she has no access at all to the intrinsic features of her mental representation that makes it a mental representation of seeing a tree.¹³

It follows that, when I introspect,

I do not (and cannot) experience the properties of the vehicle of representation; I can experience only the properties of the objects of representation.

Whereas phenomenal intentionalism says the following:

When I introspect, *I do experience the properties of the vehicle of representation, but given that it has essential intentional properties, I cannot experience them without also experiencing the properties of the objects of representation.* Because there is yet another spin that can be put on the transparency argument: it can be seen as an argument that

¹³ *Ibid.*

attending to the experience is phenomenally indistinguishable from attending to its objects:

- When I direct my attention outwards, I am aware of the properties of the objects of my experience.
- When I direct my attention inwards, to the experience, nothing changes: I am still aware of the properties of the objects of my experience.
- Therefore, *attending to the experience is phenomenally indistinguishable from attending to the objects of experience.*

7.3 Intentionalism and Sense-Data Theory

The time has come now to address the question: Is sense-data theory compatible with phenomenal intentionalism? I will consider first some possible objections to a positive answer. The main reason I mentioned it in the previous chapter: the phenomenal principle and the intentionalist thesis cannot be hold consistently together.

(P) If something seems F to S, there really is something F (the Phenomenal Principle)

(I) If something seems F to S, F is an intentional object (it may not exist).

When we take into account the special role that (I) has been given in the arguments against sense-data, that it was formulated especially to counter the phenomenal principle, it seems obvious that (P) and (I) cannot hold together. But, as I (also) said in the previous chapter, inquiring about the compatibility between the sense-data theory and intentionalism is *not* asking whether sense-data can be intentional objects. It is asking whether the sense-data theorist can have the option of saying that

sense-data *do* have intrinsic intentionality and that, for instance, a red sense-datum is *essentially* about external red.

And this brings me to the second reason to doubt the compatibility between sense-data and intentionalism: traditionally, sense-data have been conceived as not having any intrinsic intentionality. It may be said that it is part of the concept of a sense-datum that it is a particular, and particulars are not about anything. To this, it could be replied that sense-data are not just any kind of particulars, they are mind-dependent particulars and, as such, they may have different features: they can be essentially directed. “Regular” particulars are not of anything, but nor are they mind-dependent. It may be argued that being a mind-dependent particular and being essentially intentional go together.

It still can be objected that it is part of the concept of sense-datum that it is not intentional; in this case I should not use “sense-data” and look for a different name. Well, maybe, if I were to develop this idea into a theory.

The question is what kind of theory that would be; what the analysis I mentioned above would look like. Before spelling it out, I need to point out certain similarities between representationalism and the sense-data theory. (Some of them have already been noted earlier.)

One is that both hold that phenomenally experience is a presentation: *phenomenal characters are experienced as properties of the objects of experience*. Another is that both draw metaphysical conclusions from phenomenological premises.

Representationalism: *Phenomenal characters are properties of external objects*. (3)

Sense-data theory: Experienced properties are actual properties (it is entailed by the Phenomenal Principle), or: *Phenomenal characters are properties of objects*.

Representationalism shares with the sense-data theory the claim that phenomenal characters are properties of objects. This common claim is what motivates Tye to argue that sense-data theory can endorse transparency. This is what brings the two views together. (What sets them apart is no small thing, though: the objects of experience, for the sense-data theory, are mind-dependent.)

Endorsing a version of transparency is not enough to turn the sense-data theory into an intentionalist theory (Although Tye says that the sense-data theory can endorse transparency, he would say that the sense-data theory is an intentionalist theory). For this, the sense-data theorist would need to endorse a certain version of transparency. She would need to have the “right” kind of intuitions for that: that all phenomenal characters are experienced as properties of external objects. And given that she is already committed to “all phenomenal characters are properties of objects”, she would have to make a case for the following:

All phenomenal characters are properties of objects which are experienced as properties of external objects.

Speaking of the “right” version of the transparency argument, it is clear now that there is not just one such argument; in the previous sections I have overviewed several such arguments. Before proposing the kind of transparency argument that a sense-data theory could endorse, I will say one more thing about transparency. It is no wonder that it can be conducted in several ways and to serve several (and sometimes different) purposes.

The phenomenal character of experience is decomposable in atomic phenomenal characters; the transparency argument can be conducted in several ways because there are several ways of switching from (a) to (b), from *what* I experience to *how* I experience.

(a) can be expressed like this:

(p/a) I experience a red tomato on the table,

or like this:

(q/a) I experience a red, bulgy thing over there,

(b) can be expressed like this:

(p/b) it is with me as if there is red tomato on the table,

or like this:

(q/b) it is with me as if there is something red and bulgy over there.

The transparency argument can be conducted in four ways:

as **(p/a) & (p/b)**, or as **(p/a) & (q/b)**, or as **(q/a) & (p/b)**, or, finally, as **(q/a) & (q/b)**.

The sense-data theory gives the following analysis to “I experience a red tomato on the table”:

(i) If I experience a red tomato on the table, there is a red and bulgy mind-dependent particular [which represents a red tomato],

(i) is equivalent to **(p/a) & (q/b)**. A sense-data theorist could also endorse **(q/a) & (q/b)**.

Finally, I will show how she can also endorse **(p/a) & (p/b)** and thus qualify as an intentionalist view.

Suppose that I have two intuitions, at first glance conflicting: one is expressed by transparency, the other by the phenomenal principle. Can I keep them both? It seems to me that I can. Here is an introspective argument that shows why:

* I concentrate on the scene before my eyes: here's my room, the laptop is on the table, in front of me, there is a cup of tea on my left, books and sheets of paper all around me.

* On the table there is a tomato. I concentrate on it. It is red and bulgy, medium sized. The colour is not uniform – the hue on the left side is yellowish, while on the right it is intensely red. The shape is not uniform either: on the left it is almost perfectly round, while the right half has a lump that resembles a hunchback.

* I switch attention from the tomato to the experience I have of it. Nothing has changed; I am still aware of the tomato and its properties. I experience colours and shapes and I experience them as properties of the tomato.

* I focus again on the tomato and start a little experiment that consists of attending to the tomato under different conditions. As I change my position in relation to the tomato (I go closer or further away from it, I move around it, etc.) and the lighting conditions (I look at the tomato while placing myself between the tomato and the window, I draw the curtain, etc.), some of these properties change – I experience the tomato as having different colors and shapes.

* The tomato itself has not changed.

* When I meditate on this, I realize that the properties I experienced while varying the conditions, are as vivid as the properties I noticed first and which I attributed to the tomato. The phenomenology of these experiences is such that it makes me conclude that something must instantiate those properties: they are the properties of a particular. (If I experience F, there is an F.)

* Therefore, that particular is not the tomato. And it also follows that at no point was it a tomato: the properties changed gradually without any discontinuity that might have indicated that at some particular moment something replaced the tomato.

* But after reaching this conclusion, nothing changes phenomenally: even after deciding, through reflection on the phenomenological facts, that those properties cannot be properties of the tomato, I still experience them as properties of the tomato.

* After every change of conditions, I turn again my gaze inside, towards the experience, and, again, nothing has changed: I still experience every property that changes under conditions (color or shape) as the property of the tomato.

*I can keep it like this – attend to the tomato, change some conditions, attend to the experience – indefinitely. Everything is the same all over again: I experience all those properties as properties of the tomato; I realize that they cannot be properties of the

tomato, but that they must be properties of a particular; I attend to the experience, I experience them as properties of the tomato.

*Therefore, I have to conclude that the direct object of my experience is a particular, which is not the tomato, although I experience its properties as properties of the tomato.

* If it seems to me that a tomato on the table is red, there is something, a sense-datum, which is red.

*If it seems to me that there is a red tomato on the table, the particular of which I am directly aware represent a red tomato on the table. The properties that I experience are properties of a sense-datum and these properties are intentional – they represent the properties of a red tomato on the table.

If this argument is plausible, sense-data theory can be an intentionalist theory. The phenomenal principle and the transparency claim can be hold together:

(P) If it seems to S that something (from her environment) is F, there really is something (a sense-datum) which is F.

(I) If it seems to S that something (from her environment) is F, F (in her environment) is an intentional object (may not exist).

I do not expect this to be taken lightly, but neither is this a view that I actually hold. I constructed the argument rather as a heuristic device meant to test the hypothesis that the

sense-data theory could be an intentionalist theory. What really interests me is the change in the concept of intentionality; there have been several such changes but none as huge as that brought upon by *phenomenal intentionality*.

Some points about the plausibility of ‘intentional sense-data’:

It is usually claimed that the introspective arguments of sense-data philosophers put the emphasis on *particulars* being detected, which is different from claiming that experienced properties are experienced as properties of external objects. For instance, Katalin Farkas makes this point when comparing Tye’s argument with Moore’s:

But the most important difference [between their arguments] is the following: Tye proceeds by first identifying an act-independent object for his experience, the Pacific Ocean; then observes that he experienced blue *as a property of the ocean*, not as a property of his experience. This move is missing from Moore’s procedure. Moore seems to suggest that we can first identify blue as the object and then ask whether this is part of the physical object or a mental particular (or something else).

This is a crucial difference, because, in my view, this feature of Tye’s procedure makes his introspective exercise much more convincing than that of Moore.¹⁴

I agree with everything she says, but I would object if someone claimed that this is a description of the way that a sense-data philosopher usually introspects: that first she identifies a phenomenal feature (color or shape) and then ask whether it is part of the physical object or a mental particular. Some sense-data philosophers may do it this way, but we cannot generalize.

I don’t even think that this is the way that Moore does it. Let me explain what I mean: Moore’s main purpose in ‘The refutation of Idealism’ was to argue against the idealist dictum *esse is percipi* (that X exists entails that X is perceived. No X can exist independently of being perceived). He did it by showing what, in his view, is the right

¹⁴ Farkas 2008.

analysis of experience: that in terms of act (mental) and object (non-mental), which are independent of each other. And I take his choice for talking about *blue* and *green* instead of blue things and green things as a consequence of the particularity of the context. The context was not that of arguing for the phenomenal principle; the discussion was not about the status of appearance properties (that is, properties that external objects seem to have) or about experienced properties involved in hallucination (which would also involve considerations about the way the world appears to be to the hallucinating subject).

The context was focused on the structure of experience only and what was at stake was whether an experienced property is mental or not; as such, Moore may be seen as making the decision that there was no need to bring in considerations about how external things are experienced.

But it does not really matter whether sense-data philosophers argue like this or not. What matters is that a sense-data philosopher could do it differently. She could do it the way an intentionalist does, starting the argument with detection of external objects from their immediate surroundings. And I hope to have shown that it is perfectly plausible that a sense-data philosopher can do it that way.

Of course, such a sense-data theory would not be a two-layer view; it would be a view very different from that endorsed by the sense-data theorists in the first half of the XXth century. It would not be committed to experience's being constituted by two separable elements: a sense-datum and a judgment. The intentionalist sense-data view would claim that the content is determined by the sense-data, which are intrinsically

directed. The two elements, phenomenal (constituted by the properties of sense-data) and the intentional cannot be separated.

One of the problems for this view might be the following: one type of intentionalist argument against sense-data is that what I experience can have features that no particular has – be indeterminate, for instance. The idea of intrinsically intentional sense-data seems to be in trouble with this type of argument: it would have to admit that sense-data are particulars that can be indeterminate. I have not explored the issue, but I do not think this objection would be impossible to overcome if someone wanted to argue for intrinsically directed sense-data. (For one thing, there is a classical way of refuting this type of argument by sense-data theorist. My sense-data theorist could use it too. And there may be some other ways to do it.)

In any case, *prima facie* it does not seem to me impossible to imagine a sense-data philosopher for whom phenomenally everything would be the way it is for an intentionalist: all phenomenal features would be essentially directed, essentially of the world. The phenomenal “tapestry” would essentially constitute a world for her. The intuition behind the phenomenal principle – that all the time she experiences particulars – would reveal itself only in introspection. Because of the vividness of those features, she could not doubt that they are actual instances.

7.4 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the search for the meaning of ‘intentional’ with a look at the main argument for intentionalism, the transparency argument, and with a test-argument that sense-data theory can be an intentionalist theory.

The core of the transparency argument consists of two claims:

- (1) Phenomenal characters are experienced as properties of external objects.
- (2) No phenomenal character is experienced as a property of experience.

It turns out that these phenomenal claims are compatible with several views and theories. On their own, they constitute an argument against *qualia*. When paired up with some other intuitions/arguments, they end up:

- as an argument for representationalism (all phenomenal characters are properties of external objects); or
- as an argument against sense-data (no phenomenal character is experienced as an internal object); or
- as an argument for phenomenal intentionalism (phenomenal characters are intrinsic properties of experience which are experienced as properties of external objects); or
- as an argument for sense-data (phenomenal characters are properties of objects); or, last but not least,
- as an argument for essentially directed sense-data (phenomenal characters are properties of objects which are experienced as properties of external objects).

8 Conclusions

The main reason for writing this dissertation has been to clarify a general question: “What does it mean to say that perceptual experience is intentional?” and to check whether a certain suspicion is correct: that a major shift has occurred in the views about the intentionality of experience and the strategies of arguing for it.

Intentionality is the property of a mental state to be directed at external objects/states of affairs and no theory of perception denies that perceptual experiences put us in contact with the world. The debate is over *what makes experience have this feature*. There are theories which claim that perceptual experience *is essentially* a representation of external things and there are theories which argue that perceptual experience *becomes* a representation of external things. Sense-data theory, for instance, claims that experience is actually a relation to a non-physical entity, a sense-datum. Philosophers who reason along this line believe that experience is unlike thought in one important respect: in experience something is really *presented*. By contrast, theories from the first category argue that the object of experience, like the object of thought, is a mind-independent object, which may exist or not.

Sense-data theory and naïve realism share the commitment to the idea that the structure of experience is relational. Against both, the claim that experience is essentially intentional concerns, in the first place, the structure of experience: it says that experience *is not a relation* between awareness and a particular. Experience is of external things without being a relation to them and without being a relation to anything else; it is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects.

At the same time, that experience is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects can be understood as a phenomenological thesis. Experience is unlike thought in one important respect: experience has sensuous properties that thought lacks. That is to say, *the phenomenal character of experience is different from that of thought.*

Nowadays when it is said that experience is essentially a representation of mind-independent objects, this is meant as a *phenomenological thesis*: that I *always* take my experience to be of entities external, independent of me. Introspection, claim intentionalists, backs it up: the phenomenal character of experience is essentially directed – *I cannot have a perceptual experience without being with me as if I am being presented with something external.*

So there seem to be two ways of saying that experience is intentional: as a claim directed against a certain structure of experience (relational) and as a phenomenological thesis. I wanted to know how these two claims relate to each other. Whatever the relation between these two claims, it has been clear from the very beginning that they cannot be equivalent, since the phenomenal thesis is directed not only against the sense-data theory but also against the *qualia* view, which *is not* a relational view.

Sense-data can be seen as representing the world to the subject, but in themselves they are not supposed to be about anything, they do not possess intrinsic intentionality. So, goes the claim of the sense-data theorist, if I am presented with certain sensible qualities – colors and shapes – I do not necessarily take them to be *of* some external object. They become so through interpretation. This idea is shared by the *qualia* view:

experience becomes intentional through interpretation; in itself, experience does not have an object, it possesses only purely qualitative features.

Against both, the intentionality claim which is a phenomenological thesis says that experience is *essentially intentional*. Therefore, that experience is essentially intentional can be said in two ways: as a claim about the structure of experience – it is *a representation of external things*, as opposed to *being a relation*; and as a phenomenological claim – the phenomenal character of experience is essentially representational. And the existence of the *qualia* view shows that, just dropping the relational view is not enough in itself to make experience essentially intentional.

My suspicion was that a major shift has occurred in the strategy of arguing for the intentionality of experience. From arguing for the non-relational structure of experience to arguing that all phenomenal features are essentially directed the emphasis has been changed from one characteristic of intentionality – the possible non-existence of the object of experience – to the other one – directedness towards object.

The concept of aboutness is a phenomenological one; it is arrived at by reflecting on our own mental states. I know from reflection what it is for a thought or perceptual experience to have objects. I can understand what it is for my thoughts and experiences to have objects by concentrating on them *only*, without taking the world into consideration. The other idea, that these objects may not exist, is arrived at when I also take the world into consideration. It seems to me that I first identify a feature of mental states – that of having objects – and then I am confronted with a dilemma: some of these objects do not exist. And thus the need arises to account for the feature of mental states of having objects that may not exist.

But it does not seem to me that the possible nonexistence of the object is suggested in any way to me when I reflect on my mental states only. Therefore, it can be insisted that at the core of the concept of intentionality there is the notion of aboutness which is arrived at by reflection and for which Brentano argued: from the subject's point of view, mental states have objects that *seem to be external things and states of affairs*. This is what I take to be the essence of the notion of directedness: that *there is a world for the subject*.

I have argued that the shift that occurred in the strategy of claiming that experience is essentially intentional significant in the following way: while to argue for the non-relational structure of experience is to argue against sense-data, arguing that all phenomenal features are essentially directed is actually compatible with a sense-data view. With the occurrence of this shift something else happened: the structure of experience is not what is at stake anymore in the debate about the intentionality of experience.

I have argued for the following:

* Intentionality is (a) *directedness towards an object transcendent to (or independent from) experience*. (a) entails (b) *experience has an object* and (c) *the object of experience may not exist*.

* For perceptual experience, essential to the notion of directedness towards object is

(a') *the subject S takes her experience to be of an external F*.

(a') entails (b') *the subject S takes her experience to have an object F*.

(a') and (b') are the phenomenological counterparts of (a) and (b).

* Sense-data theory endorses (b') (insofar as it claims that all experiences *have objects*), and ~ (c).

* The “early” intentionality-of-experience claims were directed against the phenomenal principle, therefore the emphasis was on (c): *If something seems (phenomenally F) to S, nothing needs to be F; what seems to be F is a (mere) intentional object.*

* Intentionalism is committed to (a').

* Sense-data theory can be shown compatible with (a') if it can be argued successfully that sense-data are intrinsically directed. I offered such an argument.

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