

Phenomenal Intentionalities

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There is now a considerable literature that goes under the heading of “phenomenal intentionality.” But it features a number of distinct issues. What they have in common is the claim that intentionality bears a closer relation to phenomenology than had previously been recognized. There is a basic thesis, which is controversial, and there are further arguments attempting to draw more exciting morals from the basic thesis. My purpose in this paper is to survey these issues, see what may be at stake, and adjudicate.

To the best of my knowledge, the recent concerns for “phenomenal intentionality” were instigated by Alvin Goldman (1993)¹:

The terms *qualia* and *qualitative* are sometimes restricted to sensations (percepts and somatic feelings), but we should not allow this to preclude the possibility of other mental events (beliefs, thoughts, etc.) having a phenomenological or experiential dimension” (p. 24).²

1. Citing Jackendoff (1987) on the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon, Goldman adds,

When one tries to say something but cannot think of the word, one is phenomenologically aware of having requisite conceptual structure, that is, of having a determinate thought-content one seeks to articulate....

Entertaining the conceptual unit has a phenomenology, just not a sensory phenomenology.

He goes on to give three further arguments for his claim that intentional but nonsensory states have phenomenal character. The second is to suggest a parallel with Jackson's (1982) famous Knowledge Argument: "Someone who had never experienced certain propositional attitudes, for example, doubt or disappointment, would learn new things on first undergoing these experiences" (p. 24). (N.b., though Jackson's argument was in support of mind-body dualism, Goldman's is not; he means merely to make the point that "[t]here is 'something it is like' to have these attitudes."³)

Third, subjects introspect differences in strength or intensity between their propositional attitudes—strength of desire, firmness of intention, happiness with this or that state of affairs, confidence in judgment.

Fourth, there is a need to find a mark of the mental. Functionalism cannot provide such a mark, since countless functional states of human beings are not mental states (even psychologically relevant ones, such as food-deprived states of stomachs and secretions of sweat glands). The obvious candidate is "having a phenomenology, or intimate connection with phenomenological events" (p. 24).

(That fourth argument is very bad, and I shall ignore it hereafter. The even more obvious and also conspicuously venerable candidate for mark of the mental is intentionality itself. Brentano may have been wrong to maintain that all mental states are intentional—though I believe he was indelibly right—but "original" or nonderivative intentionality suffices for mentality, even for a Behaviorist.⁴ And it is far less obvious that there are entirely nonintentional mental states than that some mental states have neither a phenomenology nor "intimate connection with phenomenological events"; many, perhaps most, mental states are unconscious and have no phenomenology.⁵)

2. I believe Eric Lormand (1996) was the first to dispute Goldman. He contends that propositional attitudes are only accompanied by associated imagery, and it is the imagery, not the attitude itself, that has the qualitative character:

One's standing belief *that snow is white* may cause one to think *that snow is white*, by causing one to form an auditory image of quickly saying the words 'Snow is white' (or 'I believe snow is white').... At least normally, if there is anything it's like for me to have a conscious belief that snow is white, it is exhausted by what it's like for me to have such verbal representations, together with nonverbal imaginings, e.g., of a white expanse of snow, and perhaps visual imaginings of words. The important point is that the propositional attitudes are *distinct* from such...[phenomenally] conscious imagistic representations.... Excluding what it's like to have [the] accompanying...[imagistic] states, however, typically there seems to be nothing left that it's like for one to have a conscious belief that snow is white. [pp. 246-47, italics original]⁶

Lormand goes on to rebut Goldman's first and second arguments. To the first:

[I]f anything, Jackendoff provides the seeds of a response to Goldman's argument. Jackendoff uses the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon to 'demonstrate' that 'conceptual structure is *excluded* from [phenomenological] awareness' (1987, p. 290). He distinguishes the aspects of what the experience is like into a soundless 'form' and an

‘affect’ of effort, so that ‘one feels as though one is desperately trying to fill a void’ (1987, pp. 290 and 315). Neither of these aspects seem[s] attributable to nonsensory attitudes.... [T]here is something sensory that having the ‘void’ is like, akin to what *hearing silence* (as opposed to being deaf or asleep) is like.... [T]here is something sensory that the feeling of effort is like, namely, what *feeling physical effort* is like. [p. 247, italics original]

To Goldman’s second argument, Lormand responds (predictably) that where Goldman seems to introspect a “what it’s like” attaching to a thought, a doubt or a disappointment, what he is really introspecting is the qualitative characters of the accompanying imagistic representations (p. 259, n. 10).

So far, then, the issue is just that of whether there is nonsensory “phenomenology,” and in particular whether “the terms *qualia* and *qualitative*” should be restricted to sensory states. (Lormand goes on to suggest that “phenomenal” or qualitative consciousness requires the possibility of either of two types of illusion, each of which in turn directly requires the operation of a sensory system.) In particular, Goldman has claimed that at least some everyday propositional attitudes such as beliefs, thoughts, desires and intentions themselves have qualitative character.

And that is what I take to be the basic thesis of “phenomenal intentionality.” But the latter term has more recently been reserved to mean each of several considerably more specific and ambitious claims,⁷ and what I have just called the “basic thesis” has taken on the name “cognitive phenomenology.” I shall stay with the “cognitive

phenomenology” debate for a bit, but argue that it is easily settled. Then I shall turn to the more ambitious claims.

3. To narrow the field of dispute, let us observe the distinction between occurrent mental states and merely dispositional ones. Take “belief,” as the term is used by philosophers. It divides (not at all precisely) into “occurrent” belief, dispositional belief, and merely “tacit” belief. The term “occurrent belief” is, I believe, a misbegotten hybrid. A paradigm case would be a conscious and emphatic mental affirmation of some proposition. But such an occurrence or episode is more accurately called a *judgment*. Believing is a state, something that persists over some period of time, not something that happens at a time. And most plausibly it is a dispositional state, though very likely it will have what Armstrong (1968, p. 86) called a categorical basis; certainly it is at least a disposition to say things and do things and think other things. (Notice carefully that *consciousness* is not the issue; belief may issue in an episodic judgment even if that judgment is not a conscious one.⁸)

But as between our belief states, we try to distinguish merely “tacit” beliefs from ones that are actively if only dispositionally held. E.g., my wife Mary actively believes that she has a rehearsal this afternoon, even though she is not currently judging that or thinking of the rehearsal; but she only tacitly believes that squirrels neither wear top hats nor apply for bank loans. Lycan (1986) tried without notable success to explain that distinction; it remains mysterious.⁹ However, I think it does not signify here. Belief states considered only dispositionally do not have any phenomenology. Even Mary’s “active” belief about the rehearsal has no qualitative character, so long as she makes no judgment and thinks not at all of the rehearsal.

(In the same vein, I doubt that one can introspect one's beliefs or other merely dispositional states. If I want to find out what I believe on such-and-such a topic, I ask myself the question and find myself making a judgment. The judgment probably—not necessarily—manifests my existing belief and so reveals it to me, but that process does not count as my introspecting the belief itself.)

I have brought up this issue only to set it aside. Even if merely dispositional mental states have no phenomenology, it may be true that occurrent though nonsensory propositional attitudes do. And even if nonconscious occurrent attitudes have no phenomenology, it may be that conscious though nonsensory ones do.

We could go on to distinguish weaker and stronger versions of the “cognitive phenomenology” thesis, e.g.:

1. Some propositional attitudes have a phenomenology that is nonsensory.
 2. Some attitudes have a phenomenology that is neither sensory nor affective. [A Lormand supporter might suggest that even when there is no sensory imagery, there may be accompanying affect.]
 3. Some attitudes have a phenomenology part of which is contributed specifically by their propositional contents.
 4. There is a phenomenological contribution of a given propositional content that is contributed to every attitude having that content.
- Etc.

But such distinctions will not matter to the main point of this paper.

4. Charles Siewert (1998) defends Goldman's position against Lormand's objection:¹⁰ "[P]henomenal consciousness is not restricted to sensory states (even if these are taken to include imagery), for noniconic thoughts are (often) occurrences of consciousness, in the same sense as iconic thoughts (or imagery) and sense-experience" (p. 264). "Differences in the way it seems for us to think are not just differences in the way it seems for us to visualize, auralize, or otherwise image things" (p. 274).

Siewert argues by example. First (p. 275), following Strawson (1994), he adapts Moore's (1953) famous point about the experiential difference between hearing a sentence you understand and hearing a foreign sentence you do not understand. He suggests choosing such a pair of sentences and auralizing each of them. Still very different experiences, but the same (or comparable) imagery, so the experiential difference is not explained by the imagery.

Second (pp. 276-78), Siewert cites "sudden wordless thoughts" of the sort that sometimes occur to us, sudden in the sense that there is "an abrupt shift in the direction of thought" (I remember an appointment, I am relieved to find my car keys in my other pocket, I am struck by the structural resemblance of my current situation to a previous one). These thoughts can be formulated in words, but only after the fact, and they are unaccompanied by imagery. Yet they have their respective experiential qualities. (Of course, many other sudden thoughts are accompanied by imagery.)

These points seem right. A case for an even stronger thesis is made by David Pitt (2004): "Each type of conscious thought—each state of consciously thinking that *p*, for all thinkable contents *p*—has a proprietary, distinctive, individuating phenomenology" (p.5). Pitt appeals to our ready introspective ability to identify and individuate the

contents of our own propositional attitudes. How could we, from the inside and noninferentially, identify our attitude contents and tell those contents apart from those of our other attitudes, unless the contents had distinctive phenomenal characters, i.e., unless it were like something for us to be in them?¹¹ (Far from being limited to the latter rhetorical question, Pitt's argument is quite elaborate,¹² but to go into its details is not to my purpose here, for I find it very plausible.)

Vs. Lormand (pp. 23-24), Pitt contends that while Lormand offers an explanation, in terms of his two types of illusion, of why nonsensory states (allegedly) have no phenomenology of their own, he does not actually defend the claim that they have none. That is not quite right, for Lormand had made at least a Humean appeal (p. 246): Consider any supposed case of cognitive phenomenology; do you not find yourself introspecting some sensory imagery or at least affect, and is not that qualitative character what you are directly aware of rather than any further phenomenal features of the intentional state? But Pitt goes on to address the Humean argument by elaborating the Moore point.

5. Nick Georgalis (2006) disputes the claim of cognitive phenomenology (though under the name "phenomenal intentionality"). He distinguishes two uses of the "what it's like" locution, a "restricted" use that applies only to sensory experiences and an unrestricted or "extended" use that is applied to propositional attitudes and their contents. He argues that there is a crucial difference between the sensory and the nonsensory cases: In the former, the phrase ("WIL") picks out a "type-identical uniform feature" (p. 70) common to stimulations by, e.g., "certain apples, ripe tomatoes, stop signs, and fire trucks"; with ordinary propositional attitudes, no such uniform feature or aspect is

identified. This is “a critical asymmetry” (p. 75). Though Georgalis grants that “there is in *some* sense something it is like to be in some particular occurrent intentional state” (p. 71, italics original), he maintains that the uniform feature “is necessary to secure phenomenal intentionality via the WIL phenomenon” (ibid.). Then he defends his claim that the nonsensory cases lack the uniform feature, by appeal to (a) the disagreement between theorists over the very question of there being a WIL to nonsensory propositional attitudes, and (b) an inability find in himself any uniform feature.¹³ Thus, there is no real phenomenal intentionality.

Of course Pitt has argued precisely that conscious propositional attitudes and their contents have distinctive and individuating phenomenal characters. But I believe Georgalis’ point is that as long as people can on sincere introspective grounds disagree about that, the nonsensory case differs from the sensory, about which there is no significant disagreement.

My quarrel is with the assumption that the uniform feature “is necessary to secure phenomenal intentionality via the WIL phenomenon.” So far as I can tell, this is only an assumption and has not been defended. Georgalis has granted that there is a “what it’s like” to some conscious nonsensory propositional attitudes. Why is the uniform feature supposed to be required for his evidently stronger notion of phenomenality? Perhaps he means something more by “phenomenal” than do Goldman et al. But then the issue threatens to become merely verbal, and Georgalis still has done nothing to support the uniform feature requirement.

6. I agree with Georgalis that we must distinguish two uses, indeed senses, of the phrase “what it’s like.” In fact, in previous works I have argued at length that the same

ambiguity infects all related terms such as “quale” and “phenomenal character.”¹⁴ But I think the difference is a greater and more important one than Georgalis recognizes.

Let us start with “quale.” In the sense employed by C.I. Lewis (1929) and Goodman (1951), a quale is an introspectible (apparently) monadic qualitative property inhering in a mental state, such as: the color occupying such-and-such a region of your ordinary visual field right now, the pitch or the volume of a heard sound, or the smell of an odor. These properties are usually veridical parts of normal perceptual experience, but they may also be hallucinatory or otherwise purely subjective.¹⁵ To begin disambiguating, I shall introduce the term “Q-property” for them. A paradigm of a Q-property is the color of an after-image. For example, if you experience a green after-image as a result of seeing a red flash bulb go off, the greenness of the after-image is the Q-property.

Besides “qualia” in this sense, we can ask what it is like for the subject *to experience* a particular quale (in the first sense). You were presented with a green after-image; something looked green to you. But what was it subjectively like for you to experience the greenness? Whatever it was like was a higher-order property of the greenness itself: The greenness was such that for you to experience it was like...—Well, you will not easily be able to put it into words. Some philosophers, such as Block (1995) and Rey (1998), have used “quale” to mean this higher-order property, the “what it’s like”-ness that is a feature of a Q-property.

And unfortunately, some philosophers, such as Dretske (1995) and Tye (1995), have used “what it’s like” to mean a Q-property rather than the higher-order property, so

that phrase has just the same ambiguity. So do “qualitative character” and “phenomenal character.”

Here are four ways of seeing the difference between the two senses. First, again, subjective redness is a Q-property, but the higher-order “what it’s like” is a property *of* that Q-property itself. They differ categorially. (Thus, they do not, as Georgalis would have it, differ only in extent of application.)

Second, as briefly noted, a Q-property can be described in one’s public natural language, while what it is like to experience the Q-property seems to be ineffable. Suppose I ask you, “How does the after-image look to you as regards color?,” and you reply that it looks green. I persist: “Yes, but can you tell me what it’s like to experience that ‘green’ look?” At that point your linguistic resources run out. A Q-property can be described by an ordinary English word; “what it’s like” to experience that phenomenal color cannot easily be described in public natural language at all.

Third, Q-properties are presented in experience, veridically or not, as belonging to external objects. The apparent yellowness of a lemon is that *of the lemon*, and even the greenness of the after-image is that of a shimmery evanescent thing that temporarily seems to be located in real space (just in front of the spot where the red flash bulb actually went off). As Carruthers (2000) has pointed out, so far as the “what it’s like” locution applies to the Q-property, it means what the relevant part of *the world* is or seems like. But “what it’s like” in the higher-order sense applies to experiences, to the merely mental.

Fourth, Armstrong (1968) and many others have argued that Q-properties can fail to be conscious, in the sense that they can occur without their being noticed by their

subjects (see also Rosenthal (1991) and Lycan (1996)). But in such a case, it would not, in the higher-order sense, be like anything for the subject to experience that Q-property. So even in the case in which one is aware of one's Q-property, the "what it's like" requires awareness and so is something distinct from the Q-property itself.

7. Now we can adjudicate the question of whether nonsensory mental states such as thoughts, desires and intentions involve "qualia" or have "phenomenal character." In the Lewis-Goodman sense of Q-properties, they do not, because by stipulation, Q-properties are specifically sensory properties like colors and pitches and smells. In the higher-order sense some nonsensory states do have phenomenal character, because as Goldman et al. argue, it is sometimes like something, for the subject, to believe that P, to want such-and-such, or to experience doubt or disappointment. (And even for sensory states, "what it's like" in the higher-order sense comprises more than just awareness of Q-properties.¹⁶) I accept Siewert's and Pitt's rebuttals of Lormand's objections to the latter claim.

It is that simple. Sensory states present Q-properties. Nonsensory mental states do not. But, I am persuaded, conscious nonsensory states have phenomenal character in the higher-order sense. And that is all there is to the basic question of cognitive phenomenology.

8. Yet there are interesting further issues. For example, what about affective states? Do emotions feature Q-properties, or is it only that there is something it is like to experience them in the higher-order sense?

I have little idea what would settle that question, especially because it seems clear

that introspection cannot. As I have complained, the literature has persistently overlooked (to put it nicely) the difference between Q-properties and “what it’s like,” and I doubt that would have happened had the difference been transparent to introspection. Nor is it easy to identify what *besides* introspection would bear on the matter.

Here, for what it is worth, is what I think. I hold the Representational theory of Q-properties, according to which a Lewis-Goodman quale or Q-property is only an intentional content or object of a mental state, a representatum. If you see a (real) banana the yellowness you see is that of the banana. If you hallucinate a banana, the yellowness you experience is still that of the banana you seem to see, even though the represented banana and its represented yellowness are not real. When you have a green after-image, the greenness is a represented property of the represented shimmery thing. So much is, I hope, by now familiar.

Sensory states present Q-properties because our sense organs are built to register proprietary environmental features—precisely, colors, shapes, smells, pitches, textures, et al.—and having done so, to furnish representations of them. Yet the standard five external sense organs are not the only senses we have. There are of course various types of proprioception. And there are some fairly exotic external senses as well. For example, face recognition, for which it appears there is a module (Kanwisher & Moscovitch (2000)); direct perception of some emotions in others (Hobson (1990), Reddy and Morris (2004)); and we seem to have bilateral-symmetry detectors (Braitenberg (1984)).

I suggest that a mental state features a Q-property whenever the state is the normal product of a feature-detecting device. For example, pains are in part representations of tissue damage or disturbance (though of course they do not represent

those *as such*), produced by the system whose function is in part to detect such disturbance, and so the overall subjective feel of a pain has a Q-property as a component. The vaunted characteristic feeling of understanding a sentence that you hear or read may well be the registering of a meaning; there is evidence that our language modules are built to deliver whole meanings, without any inference or other calculation from more primitive percepts on the part of the whole subject (Pettit (2002)).

I have no real argument for my suggestion. All I claim is that appeal to a feature-detecting source marks a natural break between some mental states and others, and paradigm cases of Q-property-bearing states clearly fall on the one side of that line, while paradigm cases of non-Q-property-bearing states, such as abstract, nonimagistic beliefs, fall on the other.

What, then, of affect? On this model, an emotion or a mood will involve a Q-property if and only if it is in part the product of a feature detector. Whether an affective state satisfies that condition will always be an empirical question, but we can reasonably speculate. Fear, for example, may be caused in part by the operation of a sense that registers danger. If so, then it includes a Q-property of dangerousness. Anger might be the output of an affront and/or injustice detector. Even an ostensibly nonintentional mood, such as free-floating anxiety, might not only represent but do so as a result of detection. I maintain that such anxiety represents at least the possibility of something bad happening, and just conceivably it is caused by an overachieving fear system.

(I have found that many philosophers have trouble supposing that emotions and moods are intentional at all. I suspect that is because the specifically affective and conative features of such states loom much larger in introspection than do

representational features. But such skeptics should get over it. Not only do emotions have intentional objects in an everyday and fairly obvious way, but they can have more complicated intentional structures; see Prinz (2004.)

Now let us look at some alleged morals that have been drawn from the thesis of cognitive phenomenology.

9. Horgan and Tienson (2002), and Graham, Horgan and Tienson (2007), attack a doctrine they call “separatism,” according to which (1) intentionality is one property of some mental states, (2) consciousness and/or subjectivity and/or phenomenal or qualitative character make up another family of properties of some mental states, and (3) the two sorts of property are unrelated, except possibly that some mental states happen to have both. This position is (rightly) associated with Russell, and was more or less articulated with approval by Sellars (1956) and Davidson (1983). I can testify that it was also the standard attitude among philosophers of mind between the 1950s and the 1980s.

As against the separatist idea, various more recent theorists have taken various positions according to which intentionality and one or more of the “consciousness” properties are metaphysically inseparable. The best known and best entrenched of those positions is the Representational theory of Q-properties, especially as combined with a “higher-order representation” theory of conscious awareness,¹⁷ but others have flowered in just the past fifteen years, thanks in part to the thesis of cognitive phenomenology. On some mildly stronger versions of that thesis, conscious intentional properties themselves have distinctive phenomenal characters. And as will be discussed in sections *13* and *14* below, Loar (2003) and Horgan and Tienson (2002) maintain that the “what it’s like” of a

conscious belief metaphysically determines that belief's intentional content. Moreover, there is the view of Searle (see below), that intentionality actually presupposes one or more of the "consciousness" properties.

Siewert (2002/2006) sees a general issue here, that of how unified a view we can take of the mind. Historically, some philosophers have seen the mental as defined by just one property: Descartes identified the mental with "thinking"; Brentano famously held that all and only mental states are (nonderivedly) intentional.

The strongest logically possible inseparability view would be that intentionality, consciousness, subjectivity and phenomenal character are not only one and the same property but synonymously so: the terms ultimately mean just the same thing. Less drastically, those things are one and the same property and the identity can be worked out a priori; still less, they are the same property even though that is an a posteriori matter. Graham, Horgan and Tienson (2007) defend the much weaker position they call (C-Ins) (p. 470, "Ins" for "inseparatism"): that "[e]very paradigmatic mental state is phenomenally intentional in content."

Lycan (1996) defended what I called the "hegemony of representation," the view that every distinctive feature of the mind can be explicated in terms of intentionality or representation. I reject any stronger inseparatism, especially any according to which intentionality presupposes consciousness, phenomenal character, Q-properties, or the like.¹⁸

10. Is higher-order cognitive phenomenology a new problem for materialism?

Following some remarks of Horgan and Tienson (2002), Pitt suggests that it is:

"[Cognitive phenomenology] extends the problem of qualia to a realm whose presumed

immunity from it has fed hopes for a complete naturalistic theory of the cognitive mind using only the resources of current philosophy and neuroscience” (p. 5). Yes and no. What it extends is “the” problem(s) of qualia to other, nonsensory conscious intentional states. So far as there were higher-order “what it’s like” objections (as opposed to Q-property-based objections) regarding sensory states, such as the famous Knowledge Argument, those will be instigated by some nonsensory states as well. But that adds nothing to the case against materialism. If the Knowledge Argument or any other antimaterialist argument based on “what it’s like” for the case of sensory states is sound, then materialism is already false. And if some antimaterialist argument is based on nonsensory states that could not be based on sensory ones, we have not heard it and I cannot think what it might be.

It is importantly true that the presumed immunity of nonsensory intentional states from “the” problem of qualia has fed hopes for a complete materialist theory of the cognitive mind. And, for unrelated reasons, I think those hopes thus fed are misguided (see section 12 below). But Pitt and also David Chalmers (2004) have made a different though related point against materialism.

11. Pitt and Chalmers attack the Representational theory of qualia (= Q-properties). In my view, to do so is to threaten materialism itself, because the Representational theory is the only even faintly plausible materialist theory of Q-properties; if it should fail, Q-properties pose an apparently insuperable problem for materialism.

Pitt’s and Chalmers’ objection is that if intentional content itself presupposes phenomenality, then we cannot *reductively* explicate phenomenality in terms of

intentionality. The Representation theory of qualia may be true, but on pain of circularity, it cannot stand as a reduction.

I have two objections to that argument. First, the claim of cognitive phenomenology as understood here is not that (all) intentionality “presupposes phenomenality,” but at most that all *conscious* intentional states have phenomenal character.¹⁹

Second and much more importantly, we must as always observe the distinction between Q-properties and higher-order “what it’s like.” The Representational theory is a theory of the former, but by common consent the phenomenality that figures in cognitive phenomenology is the latter. Even if intentionality did presuppose phenomenality in the higher-order sense, there would be no circularity in explicating Q-properties themselves in terms of intentionality. The argument is fallacious by equivocation.

(If intentionality did per se presuppose phenomenality in the higher-order sense, then one could not noncircularly understand such phenomenality itself in terms of intentionality, as some theorists do.²⁰ But as before, the claim of cognitive phenomenology does not entail that all intentionality presupposes phenomenality, but only that conscious intentionality does.²¹)

12. Galen Strawson defends what he calls the “no-problem thesis” (1994, Ch. 7); it is that “there is no deep problem or puzzle of intentionality that is genuinely distinct from the problem or puzzle of experience, so far as the task of giving a naturalistic, materialistic account of mind is concerned” (p. 177). He argues that if we consider *nonexperiential* computational or otherwise allegedly representational states, either they are not genuinely intentional at all or, if we count them as intentional, their aboutness is

easily handled by existing causal psychosemantics such as Dretske's or Fodor's. Thus, intentionality per se is unproblematic—or rather, though admittedly there are “problems of detail,” there is “no extra deep *puzzle* about intentionality, over and above the puzzle posed by experience” (p. 193). It is experiential intentionality that is deeply puzzling. And so what generates the deep puzzle must be the experiential part *rather than* the intentional part.

Of course that conclusion does not strictly follow, because experiential features might need intentionality to help generate a deep puzzle that such features do not generate on their own. But Strawson would reasonably argue that nonintentional experiential states are just as puzzling as the intentional ones, and in just the same way.

I think all that is exactly wrong. Some philosophers of mind—Jerry Fodor is a paradigm case—hold that while *intentionality* is tractable for the materialist (“Once Descartes figured out that intentionality is representation, a good graduate student can do the rest”), issues of *consciousness*, *subjectivity*, *qualia* and the like are still deeply mysterious and materialists have barely a clue about them. I entirely disagree. On the contrary: Give me intentionality, and I have little trouble dealing with consciousness, subjectivity and qualia (Lycan, 1996). It is getting intentionality in the first place that is the truly “hard problem.” What Strawson sees as “problems of detail” have proven surprisingly intractable; materialist psychosemantics has gone nowhere in the past twenty-five years, and it faces further obstacles that have barely been discussed.²² This may not amount to a “deep puzzle,” but as before I see no deep puzzle over and above the materialist reduction of intentionality.

Strawson gives a further argument for the no-problem thesis (pp. 203-4), beginning with a more ambitious premise: It is “a very powerful intuition” that experiential features are needed for true aboutness. But how, then, does experience make the difference? “[T]he alarming answer seems to be that all it adds, in bringing about the presence of intentionality, is itself. Experienceless entities can have everything else that could possibly be needed, so far as qualifying for intentionality is concerned.” By the latter point I take it Strawson means that experienceless entities can be connected to the environment in whatever way your favorite psychosemantics requires, can have all the right behavioral dispositions, and the like. Yet if they would still not have truly intentional states, then presumably it is experience itself that makes for true aboutness, and any mystery about aboutness is just the mystery of experience.

But I have no idea why Strawson accepts the ambitious premise, nor do I share the “intuition.” Is a nonexperiential thought about my mother not “truly” about my mother?

I suspect what Strawson really thinks is that causal, teleological etc. relations between brain and environment do not (alone) suffice for aboutness or intentionality *at all*. He several times compares such relations to entirely unmysterious natural correspondences such as a mirror or a pool of water reflecting an object other than itself or a photograph being of a particular person (p. 181) or a heat-seeking missile locking onto its target (p. 187). But he maintains that even if we assume for the sake of discussion that such relations do constitute aboutness, that merely confirms the no-problem thesis. –To which I would reply, as above, that whether or not intentionality is a “deep puzzle,” materialist psychosemantics is in very bad shape and not getting better.

13. Brian Loar, Terry Horgan and others have wielded cognitive phenomenology in defense of *narrow content*.

Loar (2003) does not deny that ordinary, referential content is wide. But he maintains that there is a kind of “internal intentionality,” that does not presuppose reference or truth condition. It is introspectible, “there for the noticing” (pp. 230-31). “The internal intentionality of perceptions and thoughts consists in their apparent *directedness*, in their *purporting subjectively to refer* in various complex ways” (ibid.; italics original here and throughout).

So far, so good; it seems fair to say that even when I know I am hallucinating, my visual experience itself subjectively purports to refer. But Loar suggests, more controversially, that this internal intentionality is narrow, in that it would necessarily be shared by a duplicate brain in a vat (ibid.). Though the twin visual states might have different referents, truth conditions and wide intentional content, they “subjectively represent...things *in the same manner*.” Loar goes on to add two arguments. First, from empty visual demonstratives (p. 239): Consider a case in which you are shown a series of indistinguishable lemons and you have a singular demonstrative thought about each one; but then it is revealed to you that some of the “lemons” were hallucinatory, produced by electrodes in your brain. Regardless, “[your] successive visual demonstrative thoughts all visually presented their objects in the same way.” Again I agree. But Loar continues:

This presents itself as sameness in an *intentional* feature.... This is a non-relational phenomenal feature, by which I mean something rather strong:

we are aware of internally determined phenomenal features of visual experience, of their manifold felt aspects, and among those features--though not separable in imagination--is the directedness...mentioned [above].

...Why call it *intentional*? I do this in the hope of engaging archaic intuitions. A natural way to capture the phenomenon is this: “the visual perception purports to refer”, “it is directed”, “it points.”

Second (p. 245), Loar appeals to an inversion scenario: “We can coherently, and easily, conceive of subjectively different color-experiences that are of the same objective properties of objects.... We can also conceive of a single color experience that is, in different circumstances, of different objective properties.” (On the latter point he cites Block’s (1990) *Inverted Earth*.)

I will not address the inversion argument. Elsewhere (Lycan (1996)) I have disparaged inversion arguments generally and rebutted Block’s *Inverted Earth* version in particular. But the lemon argument is instructive.

Mind you, it is not convincing. (1) The representationalist reply is too obvious: In each case, a particular lemon is represented. Some of the lemons are real, and some are unreal, but that does not change the fact that in each case you visually demonstrate an identical lemon. The experiences are introspectively indistinguishable because the lemons themselves are indistinguishable. That the experiences all represent a lemon just like *that* is indeed the sharing of an intentional feature, but the feature is intentional because it is unabashedly representational.²³ But in any case, (2) nothing in the lemon example per se shows that the common feature is “internally determined,” i.e., narrow.

In particular (and notoriously), introspective indistinguishability does not; for uncontroversially wide representational states, such as beliefs understood referentially, would be introspectively indistinguishable from their non-coreferring twin states as well.²⁴

What is instructive is that Loar's language points toward a common feature of a somewhat different sort, that is worth recognizing. The twin experiences present their referents "in the same manner," "in the same way." Later, continuing to resist the idea that internal intentionality is relational, Loar makes the contrast explicit:

[I]t is less misleading to use an overtly non-relational form, e.g. 'directedness'. And this clearly concerns the *manner* in which a perception or visual demonstrative concept presents things rather than what is represented.... [I]t is about the how rather than the what of perception. (p. 241)

We might think Loar is talking about modes of presentation, but insofar as a "mode of presentation" is conceived as the tacit ascription of a property to the representatum, he insists that that would be just more referential semantics and so inadequate to the phenomenon.

Rather, I suggest on his behalf, our model here should be David Kaplan's (1979) notion of *character*, a function from utterance contexts to propositional contents. What twin linguistic demonstratives share even though one of them is empty is their character; likewise, of course, the meanings of indexical pronouns. And this notion carries over nicely to the mental case. I think "I am overpaid," and Twin Bill thinks "I am overpaid";

different referents and truth conditions but the same character. I think “That’s a lemon” and then, hallucinating, think “That’s a lemon”; first true, second false or truth-valueless, but the same character. And character in language has the purporting feature that impresses Loar: “Look right *there!* Look at *her!*” strongly purports to refer, even when the direction is undetermined and there is no female or other referent. Moreover, character has directly to do with meaning; indeed, Kaplan argues convincingly that a sentence’s character is a more appropriate candidate for being called the sentence’s meaning than is whatever proposition the sentence expresses on some occasion of utterance. I provisionally conclude that what Loar has been introspecting is mental character.²⁵

The simple characters of mental pronouns are evidently narrow. It would remain for Loar to argue that all mental characters are narrow, but let us suppose he has succeeded in that. Then “internal intentionality,” in the form of narrow character, is real. But an important qualification must be pointed out: A character is not a content in the usual propositional sense; it does not determine a set of possible worlds (rather, given a context, it determines something that does determine a set of worlds). So narrow character would not be narrow content, and internal “intentionality” would not per se be having an intentional content either. (In saying this I mean no criticism of Loar; so far as I can see, it is compatible with everything he says in his article.)

I cannot say whether Loar thinks that his “internal intentionality” poses a problem for materialism. At several points (e.g., p. 240) he seems to allow for the possibility that internal intentionality could be just a matter of narrow conceptual role. And if internal intentionality is narrow character, then most likely it is a matter of narrow conceptual

role. But on p. 234, Loar seems to resist that suggestion:

Conceptual roles are too *blank* to constitute internal mental content as we conceive it. Thinking is something lively--there is something that it is like to engage in it. So phenomenological reflection on thinking hardly conceives its properties in purely dispositional terms.

Well, *consciously* thinking is something lively. There is something it is like to engage in thinking when one is aware of engaging in it; otherwise not. (And of course *phenomenological* reflection on it could not conceive it purely dispositionally; that shows nothing about its actual nature.) We may, should and do ask, what is the difference between consciously thinking that P and sub- or unconsciously thinking that P? My own answer (Lycan (1987, 1996)) is in terms of higher-order perception, but the main competing theories would likewise be compatible with the view that the internal intentionality of a thought that P, per se, is just an aspect of the thought's conceptual role.

14. Horgan and Tienson (2002) take a line similar to Loar's, but their approach is different and their claims are much more ambitious. They too defend an internal type of intentionality that (sec. 3) does not suffice for (everyday) reference and truth condition, but they do not emphasize the latter feature and they appeal not at all to "the how vs. the what." Moreover, they hold not only that their internal content is determined by phenomenology, but that it is *constituted* by it (pp. 520, 524); and they make it clear that they mean content as opposed to Kaplanian character. Finally, they contend (p. 529) that their internal intentionality is "the *fundamental* kind of intentionality: the narrow, phenomenal kind that is a prerequisite for wide content and wide truth conditions."²⁶

But their main aim is to show just that there is a kind of intentional content that is determined by phenomenology. Accordingly, they introduce the notion of a “phenomenal duplicate,” a creature whose phenomenal life is just like yours. The creature might be in any sort of actual environment; it might be a brain in a vat. (Horgan and Tienson make it clear (fn 6) that by “phenomenology” they mean higher-order “what it’s like,” not Q-properties.) Their argument is based on an example, of you seeing a picture hanging crooked. If you do that, they contend, then necessarily any phenomenal duplicate of yours will also have an experience as of seeing a picture hanging crooked, and the latter experience will have the intentional content, “A picture is hanging crooked”; moreover, that content determines a “*narrow* truth condition” (p. 528). They give two arguments for those claims.²⁷

First (pp. 524, 525), they appeal to methods of investigation and verification: “[E]ach of the experiences is subject in the same way to investigation as to whether it is accurate.” (Yes and no, I think; I shall explain below.)

More importantly, Horgan and Tienson invoke what I called the “basic thesis” of cognitive phenomenology, the claim that conscious nonsensory states have phenomenal character in the higher-order sense. By hypothesis, the experiences are phenomenally identical, in that what it is like for you to be in one of them is exactly what it is like for your phenoduplicate to be in the other. Moreover:

Your phenomenal duplicate accepts the presentations delivered by perceptual experience--accepts, for example, that there is a picture and a wall--just as you do. These “belief-wise” acceptance states have exactly the same phenomenology, the what-it-is-like of occurrently believing that

thus-and-so (where one's occurrent sensory experience presents things as being thus-and-so).... It seems intuitively clear that a belief-wise acceptance state with these phenomenological features is a genuine belief. The phenomenal character of these states, which includes the phenomenology of role, constitutively determines that they are genuine beliefs.... [And] the two states have the same phenomenal intentional content, i.e., the same phenomenologically determined truth conditions. (p. 525)

Let us get two points out of the way. First, even if the phenomenology does determine a narrow content, nothing in the example shows that it *constitutively* determines anything. (Nor, in their article, do Horgan and Tienson provide any other bridge from "determined" to "constituted.")

Second, we need not dispute that your duplicate's acceptance state is a genuine belief; the issue is over its alleged narrow content. But as directed toward content, Horgan and Tienson's argument is simply fallacious.

The premise is true, because true by stipulation. But given the tenets of standard Putnamian externalism,²⁸ nothing of interest follows from it, and certainly not that there is any intentional content necessarily in common as between you and your duplicate. That the experiences are phenomenally identical is to say no more than that they are introspectively indistinguishable. And it is a Putnamian given that introspective indistinguishability does not show narrowness of content. My belief that water is wet is introspectively indistinguishable from Twin Bill's corresponding belief about XYZ. All Putnamians know and grant that. The question of narrow content is a further question.

The same applies to Horgan and Tienson's example. Suppose there is a Picture-Animal Earth, which is just like our planet except that instead of pictures, it has strange animals that look and behave just like pictures. Then your perceptual content and perceptual belief as usually conceived are wide; your duplicate perceives and believes something different, about an animal clinging to a wall. It remains to be shown that in addition to those everyday wide contents there is a shared narrow content--but that is just what the example is alleged to have shown. Also (returning to Horgan and Tienson's appeal to verification), although you and your duplicate would have some investigative avenues in common, as regards there being a physical object touching a wall at such-and-such an angle, their investigations would diverge, because works of art and animals would have to be traced to different origins.²⁹

In characterizing their notion of narrow content, Horgan and Tienson adopt Loar's rhetoric of "purporting to refer" (p. 529), and as before I have no quarrel with that. But it shows at best that phenomenal duplicates share Kaplanian characters, not that they share contents in any more referential or truth-conditional sense.

I have a deeper though less conclusive objection to Horgan and Tienson's argument. The argument is supposed to establish that there is a narrow intentional content, by showing that an experience's phenomenal character metaphysically determines an intentional content. But (obviously) that would work only if the phenomenal character is itself narrow. And that I and some other Representationalists emphatically do not grant. We have independently defended "phenomenal externalism," the claim that phenomenal character is not necessarily shared by molecular duplicates.³⁰

Horgan and Tienson are aware of the logical point, and they briefly argue against

phenomenal externalism:

[Granted,] phenomenology depends causally on factors in the ambient environment that figure as *distal* causes of one's ongoing sensory experience. But...these distal environmental causes generate experiential effects only by generating more immediate links in the causal chains between themselves and experience, viz., physical stimulations in the body's sensory receptors--in eyes, ears, tongue, surface of the body, and so forth. And...these states and processes causally generate experiential effects only by generating still more immediate links in the causal chains between themselves and experience--viz., afferent neural impulses, resulting from transduction at the sites of the sensory receptors on the body. Your mental intercourse with the world is mediated by sensory and motor transducers at the periphery of your central nervous system. Your conscious experience would be phenomenally just the same even if the transducer-external causes and effects of your brain's afferent and efferent neural activity were radically different from what they actually are--for instance, even if you were a Brain in a Vat with no body at all, and hence no bodily sense organs whose physical stimulations get transduced into afferent neural inputs. (pp. 526-27)

But this is a gigantic non sequitur; its concluding sentence simply does not follow from the premises about causal mediation. To see that, replace "phenomenology," "experience" etc. in the quoted passage with "belief content." The result will be an

obviously fallacious argument against standard Putnamian externalism.

What of Horgan and Tienson's contention that their narrow content is "fundamental" and "is a prerequisite for" ordinary wide content? It is defended on p. 529:

The truth conditions [of "Bill Clinton is a womanizer"] are wide.... But in another and more fundamental way, the truth conditions are narrow, because what *can be* referred to in those thoughts is determined by phenomenal intentionality--in particular, by the phenomenally given grounding presuppositions. The thought will have wide content only if something in the thinker's environment satisfies the phenomenal intentional grounding presuppositions of that thought.

(The "grounding presuppositions" are (p. 528) those of the "apparent world" determined by phenomenal intentionality, mainly the existence of the individuals, kinds, etc. that are veridically or nonveridically depicted.)

There are two issues here. First, "what *can be* referred to in those thoughts is determined by phenomenal intentionality." In the case of conscious thoughts,³¹ that may be so. But what that directly suggests is that "phenomenal intentionality" determines external reference, given a subject's thought in a context. --Which is exactly what a Kaplanian character does. So Horgan and Tienson have not (yet) shown that their narrow "content" is actually intentional content over and above character, much less that a narrow intentional content is required for ordinary content.

Second, the matter of reference being determined "in particular, by the

phenomenally given grounding presuppositions.” The idea seems to be that the presuppositions are existential quantifications and so afford a list of properties, i.e., those named by the predicates occurring in the existential quantifications, and in a context the external referent of a term is whatever thing has those properties, i.e., the “satisfier” (p. 528) of the predicates. I do not see that at all. Viz., I see no reason whatever to suppose that external reference to, say, an individual person is determined by any set of properties that could be narrowly specified.³²

15. Upshot: The thesis of cognitive phenomenology seems to be true. But whether or not it is, it has none of the more contentious implications claimed for it.³³

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Footnotes

¹ Flanagan (1992) voices one, but he cites a 1991 presentation of Goldman (1993).

Related themes, though not quite the same notion, had appeared in earlier works, such as Moore (1953), Loar (1987), Searle (1990), and McGinn (1992).

² Strawson (1994) chimes in: “[T]he experience of seeing red and the experience of now seeming to understand this very sentence, and of thinking that nobody could have had different parents...all fall into the vast category of experiential episodes that have a certain qualitative character for those who have them as they have them” (p. 194). He adds, “We are familiar with sensory modalities, but it looks as if these need to be subsumed under a more general category of experiential modalities” (p. 196).

³ The phrase of course goes back to Farrell (1950) and Nagel (1974).

⁴ Unless you are an Eliminative Behaviorist. I shall ignore this.

⁵ Strawson (1994, sec. 6.4) argues that the concept of a “mental *being*” is prior to that of a mental state or event, on the grounds that some computational-type states should be counted as mental or not depending on whether their subjects are mental beings to begin with. He explicates “mental being” in terms of the capacity for experience (cf. fn 2 above). (In the rest of Ch. 6 he also questions whether, merely dispositional states ought to continue to be counted as mental. But he does not address Brentano’s venerable criterion--except to point out by implication that the intentional contents of dispositional beliefs and preferences are wide and hence not “intrinsic” to the relevant brain states, which would be no surprise to anyone.)

⁶ I do not know why Lormand includes the qualifications “At least normally” and “typically.”

⁷ E.g., Loar (2003), Horgan and Tienson (2002). (To the best of my knowledge, Loar’s use of the term was the first.) Horgan and Tienson explicitly use the capitalized term “Phenomenal Intentionality” to mean this thesis (p. 520): “There is a kind of intentionality, pervasive in human mental life, that is constitutively determined by phenomenology alone.” I shall discuss that thesis in section 14 below.

⁸ There may be some further sense in which a belief might be “occurrent” rather than merely dispositional without being an event such as a judgment. E.g., during some period a subject’s brain might contain an explicit representation that P, without the subject’s ever even unconsciously judged or thought that P. But that possibility has no bearing on the present project.

Here and throughout this paper, by a “conscious” state I mean one whose subject is directly aware of being in it. I assume that when a subject is in an intentional state of which s/he is entirely unaware, there is nothing it is like for her/him to be in it.

⁹ But see also Crimmins (1992).

¹⁰ Though without citing either of them. He does cite Flanagan (1992) and Strawson (1994).

¹¹ Pitt contends that those phenomenal characters are the features of the attitude-tokens in virtue of which those tokens have the propositional contents they do. See also Pitt (forthcoming).

¹² He draws an analogy to what Dretske (1979) calls “simple seeing.”

¹³

When I turn my attention to my occurrent intentional states, I fail to find a uniform feature type-identified by ‘what they are like’ to me. That is a sincere report from my first-person perspective. What it is like to entertain the *beliefs that P, Q, R,...* on different occasions, though all instances of believings do not seem to me to share some uniformly identifiable phenomenal or qualitative feature.... [F]urthermore, the WIL that I do find seems largely influenced by a plethora of varying background conditions, most of which are irrelevant to the specific believing attitude. I find a similar lack of uniformity when I consider classes of other occurrent attitudinal states. Things are no better (for me) when I attend to the contents themselves. [p. 72]

¹⁴ A similar distinction had been made by Flanagan (1992); he spoke of a “narrow” sense and a “wide” sense of the term “quale.” And Carruthers (2000) is good on this; see below.

¹⁵ A quale can be thought of as the distinctive phenomenal property of an apparent phenomenal individual—i.e., an individual of the sort that Russell would have taken to be a “sense-datum,” such as a colored *patch* in your visual field, or a heard sound or an

experienced smell considered as phenomenal objects. But, n.b., one need not believe in actual phenomenal individuals or sense-data to identify the sort of property I mean. We can discuss subjective color, and mull over its ontological status, without for a second believing that there is an actual Russellian colored sense-datum.

¹⁶ For elaboration of this point, see pp. 483-86 of Lycan (1998).

¹⁷ As in Lycan (1996).

¹⁸ Wilson (2003) argues that no very strong inseparatist claim is plausible. See also Van Gulick (1995).

¹⁹ Searle (1990, 1992) may endorse the stronger thesis.

²⁰ E.g., Lycan (1996), Rosenthal (1997).

²¹ As to *presupposing*, if conscious intentionality presupposes phenomenality, that is by way of “conscious,” not “intentionality.”

²² For one thing, current psychosemantics addresses only thoughts and beliefs, and not more exotic propositional attitudes whose functions are not to be correct representations. For another, it does not apply to any thought that is even partly metaphorical (hence not to many thoughts at all).

²³ Anticipating this rejoinder, Loar balks at the idea that just as one experience represents an actual lemon, so does another represent a nonactual one. “At the same time, one has a good sense of reality, and so wants to hold that the merely intentional lemon is nothing at

all, and so not something that can resemble something else” (p. 84). By his echo of Russell (“good sense of reality”), Loar suggests that the representationalist is in bed with Meinong, and we all know about Meinong. But the metaphysics of nonexistence is everyone's problem, not peculiarly that of the representationalist or, for that matter, one's current opponent on whatever issue. There are things that do not exist. Anyone can give a long list of examples. Get used to that plain fact. However horrible it is for fundamental ontology, it does not entail Meinong's account of it, or David Lewis' outrageous concretism, or any other particular metaphysics of nonexistence. (I myself am an Ersatzer (Lycan, 1994)). Moreover, I see no plausibility in Loar's claim that nonactual things and people cannot resemble actual ones; there are plenty of fictional characters who strongly resemble actual persons, and in some cases that is no coincidence.

²⁴ That there are wide representational states is not entirely uncontroversial, and perhaps not as controversial as it should be. But I here assume Putnamian externalism for the sake of discussion.

I can imagine a further argument for Loar's position, even regarding the “uncontroversially” wide contents: from the introspective indistinguishability to an underlying narrow content that explains it. But that would require a good deal more detail.

²⁵ That idea, particularly as a way of identifying what is common to a pair of Putnamian twins, has previously been elaborated and defended, by Stephen White (1981). Jerry Fodor (1987) adopted it for a while.

²⁶ See also Kriegel (2007). Kati Farkas (forthcoming 2008) argues contra Loar, Horgan et al. that if we grant this notion of phenomenal intentionality, there is no reason to believe additionally in Putnamian externalist content at all.

²⁷ They go on (p. 526) to announce, “Virtually everything we have been saying is really just attentive phenomenological description, just saying what the what-it’s-like of experience *is* like. It is just a matter of introspectively attending to the phenomenal character of one’s own experience.” Please.

²⁸ I here assume Putnam’s picture for the sake of argument, as do Horgan and Tienson. N.b., I am *not* question-beggingly assuming the stronger thesis that Horgan and Tienson (p. 527) call “strong externalism,” which entails that there is no narrow content.

²⁹ It may be objected that Horgan and Tienson have merely chosen a bad example, in that the concept “picture” can be Twin-Earthed in the way I have done. But there is a dilemma for any replacement example: Either it can similarly be Twin-Earthed, or it features only a narrow everyday content to begin with and so does not reveal any special narrow content underlying an everyday wide one.

³⁰ Dretske (1996), Lycan (1996, 2001), Tye (1998), Wilson (2004). Wilson (2003) also wields phenomenal externalism against Horgan and Tienson.

³¹ Notice that Horgan and Tienson’s entire case applies only to conscious mental states. (Though they would be justified in asking why, if their conclusions are true of conscious intentional states, we should think the same does not hold for nonconscious ones as well.

³² The idea is disturbingly reminiscent of the Jackson-Chalmers idea of “primary” or “A-intensions (Chalmers (1996), Jackson (1998)). Nor is that an accident: Horgan and Tienson’s fn 26 acknowledges “some kinship” with that idea. For critiques, see Soames (2004) and Lycan (forthcoming).

³³ Thanks to the faculty seminar at East Carolina University for several hours’ discussion of this issue in 2004, to Nick Georgalis for subsequent conversations that inspired this paper, to Dave Chalmers for an important correction, and to audiences at the University of Auckland and the ANU for very interesting and useful discussion.