

Phenomenality and Intentionality

A conference on the contents of experience

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Abstracts

Three puzzles about spatial experience

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[Abstract to follow]

The derived content view

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Intentionalism and the phenomenal intentionality theory aim to unify phenomenal consciousness and intentionality. These projects face challenges in cases where there seems to be a mismatch between phenomenal character and intentional content. A recent strategy for responding to these kinds of challenges is to distinguish between two types of mental content: original, or source content, and derived content, and to argue that only source content corresponds in the required way with phenomenal character. We review accounts of the distinction between source and derived content and assess the prospects of the general strategy.

An intentional theory of phenomenality: Consciousness as the world apprehending itself

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I explore a higher-order thought theory of consciousness (HOTT) combined with a neutral monist ontology. On this view the sorts of qualitative properties we meet in experience are basic features of all matter, of which the matter in heads is but a tiny portion. What is special about brains is their enabling a special relation of matter to itself whereby it apprehends its own qualitative nature. A plausible candidate for this relation is some form of higher-order representation of qualities. HOTT is held to suffer from a number of defects, perhaps the most serious of which are that i. it doesn't seem apt to capture the rich phenomenology of consciousness as we know it (it 'leaves out what it is like') and ii. it struggles with cases of misrepresentation, for example where a higher-order thought is 'empty' - representing a sensory state to be present that is in fact absent. I show how a modified HOTT-with-neutral monism can

meet these challenges, and consider the impact of the theory on the conceivability of zombies.

Does heat perception belong to touch?

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In this paper I explore the relation between heat perception and touch. Many assume that heat perception is a part of touch. I think they should be regarded as different senses. In his recent paper ‘What is touch?’ Matthew Ratcliffe argues that touch is “a heterogenous assortment of variably integrated perceptual achievements”. According to Ratcliffe, it will not work to treat touch as involving more than one sense. In support of his position he makes two claims. The first regards heat perception: heat perception can have a wide range of experiential contents. The second regards the relation between heat perception and touch: there is a good phenomenological case for the unity of touch and heat perception. Ratcliffe uses the putative variety of heat perception as evidence for the variety of tactile perception. He advances his phenomenological case in order to defend against the possible response to his first claim that heat perception does not belong to touch. I shall argue that the evidence in support of the phenomenological case for the unity of heat perception and touch is only evidence of an appearance of unity, and that there is no real or underlying unity. In doing so I shall show how the alleged variety of heat contents is not as wide as it is made out to be.

Soul dust: The magic of consciousness

NICHOLAS HUMPHREY

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How is phenomenal consciousness possible? What biological purpose does it serve? My talk will be in two parts. (1). I will discuss the evolution of consciousness as “theatre”. I will explain how our sensations are representations of an active response to stimulation, that we stage as a kind of pantomime inside our heads, but that originated as a form of overt bodily expression. Further, I’ll explain how natural selection could have designed this pantomime so as to give us the impression that we are experiencing something that “is like something” – like something it actually cannot be! (2). I will discuss how our experience of this remarkable self-made show, just because of its seemingly magical phenomenal properties, changes our own sense of who and what we are and what kind of world we live in. In short, consciousness lights up the external world for us and makes us, as “subject selves”, feel special and transcendent. Thus consciousness paves the way for spirituality, and allows human beings to reap the rewards, and anxieties, of living in the “soul niche”.

Followed by
A comment on Humphrey

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What should the Naive Realist say about hallucinations?

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The aim of this paper is to reconcile a "positive" Naive Realist account of hallucination (outlined in my "Good News for the Disjunctivist about (one of) the Bad Cases", forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*) with what I take to be the best motivation for Naive Realism (presented in my "Why Naive Realism?", forthcoming in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*). In the first section, I will criticise M.G.F Martin's argument for the claim that positive accounts of hallucination undermine Naive Realism, clearing the way for a Naive Realist-friendly Intentionalist account of hallucinations. In the second section, I will summarise what I take to be the best case for Naive Realism, and argue that it involves identifying the phenomenal character of a veridical experience of a given property with the subject perceiving an instance of it.

However, the phenomenal character of a total hallucination cannot be identified with the subject perceiving instances of properties, since the subject of a total hallucination doesn't perceive anything in her environment at all. So how should the Naive Realist account for the phenomenal character of hallucination? In the final section, I will explore two ways of answering this question. The first way involves claiming that the phenomenal character of experience is multiply realisable (by both perceiving an instance of a property and perceptually representing it). This strategy is problematic, so I will conclude by exploring the possibility of following William Fish in denying that hallucinations have phenomenal character. I will suggest that the Naive Realist could give an Intentionalist account of hallucinations (contrary to Fish's view), but deny that a hallucinatory intentional state gives rise to phenomenal character. I will argue that, although this account has one big drawback, it doesn't have as many as Fish's version does (thanks to its Intentionalist component).

Cross-sensory synaesthesia

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We can discern two opposing viewpoints regarding synaesthesia. The first is that synaesthesia is *the strangest thing* (to borrow Harrison's 2001 book title). Synaesthesia, according to this perspective, is an oddity or a disordered condition; it has been described as 'mysterious', 'unbelievable', and 'romantic neurology'. The second is that synaesthesia is *pervasive*. Synaesthesia, according to this perspective, is at the heart of nearly any significant human cognitive achievement. Ramachandran, for instance, claims that synaesthesia explains phenomena from language to metaphor to creativity itself. This paper reconciles these perspectives for *cross-sensory synaesthesia*. The reconciliation requires distinguishing synesthesia from cross-modal perceptual illusions and from veridical synaesthesia.

Perceptual modes of presentation

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Chalmers (2006, 71-74) puts forth his two-stage view concerning the phenomenal content of perceptual experience, which consists in the Edenic content, and the Fregean phenomenal content or mode of presentation (mop) of the experience, which is a representational content that is also a condition of imperfect veridicality. Imperfect veridicality is associated with a Fregean condition of satisfaction: a phenomenal experience F will be imperfectly veridical iff its object has the property that matches the property attributed to the object by the experience's Edenic content. A physical intrinsic property matches the perfect property F iff it normally causes phenomenally F experiences. The mop(F)= "the property that normally causes phenomenally F experiences." The mop(O)="the object that the experience is appropriately connected to, that is, the object that stands in a causal perceptual relation with the experience." Chalmers acknowledges that Fregean mops do not wear their phenomenality valence on their sleeves, since neither causality nor the subject of the experience figure in the phenomenology of the experience.

I will concentrate here only on one aspect of Chalmers' attempt to defend the phenomenal status of the ordinary Fregean mop, specifically the one that centers on the inferential role of the mops in perception. I will claim that these mops have no place in visual perception since Chalmers' mops can neither be the cognitive or perceptual significance of the content in perception, nor do they play any functional/processing role in it. I will also claim that the root of the problem lies in Chalmers' two-dimensional semantics as it applies to perception.

How does phenomenology put us in touch with the physical world? A defence of a traditional empiricist approach to perceptual content

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There are many issues concerning the relations between phenomenality and intentionality. The most overarching one concerns their relative separateness or interdependence. One side says that one can reduce phenomenality to intentionality – it is no more than a species of representation (Tye) – and the other that intentionality depends on (phenomenal) consciousness (Searle). I will not approach this issue directly, because I think that the concept of intentionality involved in this debate is radically mistaken. Appendix 2 contains my thoughts on this. The issue with which I shall be directly concerned here is the question of how sense-experience puts us in touch with the physical world. Is it because all phenomenal states are intentional and purport to represent external objects or their features (which is not the same as the claim that phenomenality can be reduced to intentionality), as the majority of modern philosophers seem to think, or is there another account? The main fashionable alternative is that version of naïve realism that is dubbed *relationism*, represented by Martin, Travers, Campbell and Brewer. I have argued against both representationalism and relationism in various other places. I belong to a more primitive tradition, for I am a sense-datum theorist. Intentionalists and relationists tend to have two reasons for rejecting this traditional theory. One is that it cuts us off from the world, such that we could have no conceptions of it. For us, all would be ‘darkness within’. The other is that it restricts our perceptual content, so that we are aware of such minima as colour patches and not real, live three dimensional objects, with backs and insides. My main aim in this paper is to show how a sense-datum theorist can have a full and rich phenomenology, and so to answer both objections, and to do so by giving an account of this richness which is, I believe, more illuminating than any account available to its rivals.

Transparency, qualia realism, and representationalism

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Qualia realists hold that experiences have intrinsic qualities of which their subjects can be directly aware via introspection (so-called 'qualia'). These qualities make up the phenomenal or subjective character of the experience. Representationalists deny this. They hold instead that what matters to the phenomenal character of an experience is only the qualities *represented* by the experience. Often

representationalists point to the phenomenon of transparency to support their position at least in connection with perceptual experiences. In this talk, I will explain how the phenomenon of transparency is best understood in connection with perceptual experience, how it creates trouble for qualia realism and how it supports representationalism. Along the way, I will distinguish different versions of representationalism, including property representationalism and content representationalism. I will also respond to a variety of objections that have arisen in the last 15-20 years to the claim that perceptual experience is transparent.

Followed by
A Comment on Tye

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On the problem of phenomenal space

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Sense data theories face the problem of the location of sense data in space. I argue that if we examine possible solutions we have to accept that they must be in a phenomenal space. In this case sense data proponents have to consider the question of the relation between phenomenal and physical space. Chalmers' Edenic content attributes perfect spatial properties which are not instantiated in the physical world. I maintain that perfect spatial properties could be understood as mental properties lying in phenomenal space. In this way analogous problems arise concerning their relation to physical space. The proposed solution is of a Kantian kind and suggests that through perception there is no access of the subject to a mind independent physical space.