

## **Intentionalism**

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### **1. Introduction**

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.

Under the heading of ‘thought’ we can include many different kinds of mental apprehension of an object—including relatively temporary episodes of contemplating or scrutinising, as well as persisting states like beliefs and hopes which are not similarly episodic in character. These are all ways of thinking about an object. But even construing ‘thought’ in this broad way, it is clear that not all mental states and events are thoughts: sensations, emotions and perceptual experiences are not thoughts, but they are also paradigmatically mental. Do these mental states and events have objects too? Or are there mental states and events which have no objects?

The view that all mental phenomena have objects is sometimes called ‘Brentano’s thesis’ or the thesis that intentionality is the ‘mark’ of the mental.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the name ‘Brentano’s thesis’ is given to certain other views too: for example, to the view that *only* mental phenomena are intentional, or that *all and only* mental phenomena are intentional, or that *nothing physical* is intentional. These views are, however, distinct from the view that all mental phenomena are intentional. For holding that all mental phenomena are intentional does not imply that nothing non-mental is.<sup>2</sup> And holding that all mental phenomena are intentional does not imply (*pace* Dennett 1969) that nothing physical is intentional; since if physicalism were true, then the mental itself would be physical. What I am concerned with here, however, is the idea that all mental states are intentional, regardless of whether anything else is, or whether anything physical is.

In recent years there has been considerable debate over whether all mental states are intentional; in particular, over whether all *conscious* mental states are intentional or entirely intentional. I will use the term *intentionalism* for the general thesis that the nature of a conscious mental state is determined by its intentionality. (Intentionalism is sometimes called *representationalism*; the difference is purely terminological. I prefer ‘intentionalism’.<sup>3</sup>) There are a number of ways of developing this general thesis; in

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<sup>1</sup> See Moran (1996) for a historical discussion of this thesis, and Crane (1998) for further elaboration of the thesis; for Brentano’s views, see Brentano (1874/1995); for some discussions of their contemporary relevance, see Crane (2006-b).

<sup>2</sup> Some philosophers think that certain non-mental states and events exhibit a kind of intentionality: for example, the rings of a tree can represent or indicate their age (see Dretske 1981).

<sup>3</sup> For recent discussions of representationalism or intentionalism, see Bain (2003), Block (1990), Byrne (2001), Chalmers (2004), Dretske (1995), Hellie (2003), Jackson

what follows I shall examine two of them. One is the view that the conscious character of a state of mind is determined by its intentional or *representational content*. The other is the view that the conscious character of a state of mind is determined by (what I shall call) its *entire intentional nature*. I shall argue for the superiority of the second view over the first. But before doing this, I need to explain what I mean by intentional nature and intentional or representational content.

## **2. Object, mode and content**

I stipulated above that the *object* of an intentional state is what the state is about, or what it concerns, or what it is directed upon. The object of a thought can therefore be given in a correct answer to the question, ‘what is this thought about?’ (This is why intentionality is sometimes called ‘aboutness’). Hence my thought that Odysseus was cast ashore at Ithaca while fast asleep is about Odysseus. But it is also about Ithaca, and maybe other things too. In other words, intentional states need not have only *one* object: the question ‘what is this intentional state about?’ (‘what are you thinking about?’) can have many answers, all of which may be correct.

For some states of mind which are intuitively intentional or representational—in the sense that they intuitively seem to concern things other than themselves—the question ‘what is this intentional state about?’ is awkward or makes little sense. It is awkward, if not ungrammatical, to say ‘what is your desire for a bottle of inexpensive

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(2002), Kind (2003), O’Dea (forthcoming), Siewert (2003), Stoljar (forthcoming), Thau (2002), Tye (1995). Note also that the contemporary use of ‘representationalism’ differs from an earlier usage: namely, from the view that our perceptual access to the world is ‘mediated’ by representations. This is a view which is obviously very different from representationalism as discussed here; to avoid confusion, Block prefers to use the term ‘representationism’.

champagne about?'. A desire is a desire *for* something, not a desire *about* something. But clearly my desire concerns something other than itself, just as my thought about Odysseus concerns something other than itself. And it is the nature of this 'concerning' which is the focus of the study of intentionality. Hence we should not become too attached to the words 'about' and 'aboutness' in describing intentionality. If we do, then we might find it hard even to understand the view that conscious states are intentional. For example, intentionalists say that a headache is an intentional state; but the question 'what is your headache about?' makes little sense. Here we can avoid this superficial problem by thinking of intentional states in a more general, abstract and semi-technical way to begin with: intentional states are 'directed upon' objects, and 'objects', by definition, are what intentional states are directed on. Sometimes intentionality is described even more abstractly as 'self-transcendence,' the idea being that intentional states are concerned with what transcends the state itself. Given what I mean by 'object,' this is just another way of saying that intentional states have objects.

So much should be uncontroversial. To say more, we have to start constructing a theory of intentionality. I begin with intentional objects. Intentional objects, as I think of them, have two distinctive characteristics. First, since intentional objects are what we think about, desire or hope for, and we can think about or desire or hope for things that do not exist, it follows that some intentional objects do not exist. These can be called 'mere intentional objects.' Remember that my use of 'object' here is just a stipulation meaning, *whatever it is on which your state of mind is directed*. So saying that there are mere intentional objects is another way of describing the uncontroversial fact that we can think about (hope for etc.) things that do not exist; it is a further question how this fact should be understood. Some philosophers (e.g. Parsons 1980) think that we need a

logical and metaphysical account of non-existent objects; others believe that all apparent reference to such objects must be explained away in the style of Quine (1948). Here I simply note the fact and do not attempt to explain it.

The second characteristic is related to the first. As indicated above by my talk of ‘self-transcendence’, intentional objects are not *immanent* in intentional states. That is, if an intentional object exists at all, its existence ‘transcends’ any intentional state which has it as its object.<sup>4</sup> I mean this transcendence of the intentional object to imply that it is never essential to an intentional object that it is the object of any particular state of mind. (This applies even to those intentional states which are the objects of ‘higher-order’ intentional states: my thought that *p* is independent from, and inessential to, the thought that I think that *p*.) Externalists about mental content may say that it is essential to certain states of mind that they involve a real relation to some real thing (e.g. water). But they do not think that it is essential to *water* that it is the object of any particular mental state.

Saying what the intentional object of a state of mind is does not yet tell us what the state of mind itself is, since the same intentional object can be the object of many different states of mind. In order to fully characterise different states of mind, we need to make two further distinctions. One is that the same object can be the object of a desire, a thought, a hope and so on. This is what I call a difference in *intentional mode*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In saying this I side with Husserl (1901) as opposed to Brentano (1874/1995). Brentano originally thought that the objects of intentional acts were phenomena (i.e. appearances); Husserl rejected this and emphasised the transcendence of the object.

<sup>5</sup> Here I follow John Searle (1983). Husserl (1901) calls this difference a difference in intentional ‘quality’; David Chalmers (2004) uses the term ‘manner’. Those (like Davidson [1980]) who think that all intentional states are propositional attitudes would call it a difference in ‘attitude.’

The other distinction is that the same object could be presented to the mind in different ways even when the mode is the same: my bottle of inexpensive champagne could also be thought of as a bottle of inexpensive famous sparkling wine from France. This kind of difference in the way the intentional object is presented is what I call a difference in *intentional content*.

Every intentional state must have an intentional content in this sense. This is because the intentional object of a state is what the state is directed on; but a state cannot be directed on something without that thing being *represented* in one way or another. There is no such thing as a state of mind which has an object represented in no particular way—what could this possibly mean? The idea of representation itself implies representation in a particular way: in representing something in language or in pictures, one has to choose some particular way of representing it. The particular way in which the intentional object is represented is what I call the content of the state. So for a state to have a content is for it to have an object represented in a particular way.

Intentional content is representational content.

Intentional states, then, involve both intentional mode and intentional content. But what is the relationship between the intentional *content* and the intentional *object* of a state? Different theorists have different views of this relationship. Some think that the content of an intentional state must determine its object: in other words, that states with the same content must have the same object. Someone who thinks this might then be led to think that even though its existence transcends the intentional state, the intentional object is nonetheless an essential part of the state, since states with different objects are

different in their nature.<sup>6</sup> Since I believe that many intentional states have the same content regardless of whether their objects exist, I must reject the thesis that intentional content determines intentional object. On the conception of intentionality I favour, the intentional object is never part of the state. The nature of the intentional state is exhausted by its mode and content.

In a famous passage, Brentano gave some examples of the ‘intentional inexistence of an object’: ‘in presentation, something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on’ (Brentano 1874: 88). This implies that the object of a presentation is what is presented, the object of love is what is loved etc. However, given what I have just said about intentional objects, we should not characterise an intentional object as what is  $\emptyset$ -d for *any* intentional mode  $\emptyset$ . One reason is that what is *believed*, for example, is a proposition, and a proposition is not the intentional object of a belief. When someone believes something, the proposition that they believe exists (or so I say); but the object of their belief might not. There is a debate about the existence of propositions, but this is not the same issue as the issue of the existence of intentional objects. Those who are sceptical of propositions do not think that some of them exist and some of them do not. Also, the propositional content of a belief is, on most views, essential to it. But on the conception of intentionality I favour, it’s not the case that the existence of the object is essential to the intentional state. Finally, it is clear that the belief that Odysseus was cast

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<sup>6</sup> Hilary Putnam (1975) employs a similar principle (‘intension determines extension’) in his argument for the claim that ‘meanings ain’t in the head’. See Farkas (2006) for discussion of such principles in connection with externalism and internalism.

ashore at Ithaca while fast asleep is about Odysseus (its object) and not about any proposition.

The phrase ‘what is  $\emptyset$ -d’ picks out a different intentional element for different intentional modes. In the case of fear, for example, we can say that *what you fear* is the object of your fear, not its content. If you are frightened of the dog around the corner, that is the object of your fear, that is what you are frightened of. Matters are different for hope, belief and wonder, for example. What is believed, hoped or wondered is the content of the belief, hope or wonder. The lesson is that we cannot derive a systematic conception of intentional content and object simply from reflection on phrases like ‘what is believed/feared/etc’ alone.

This whole way of thinking about intentionality allows for a number of different understandings of content. On a dominant view, for example, the contents of all intentional states are assessable as true or false; in other words, the content is *propositional*. There is an on-going debate about the nature of propositions (see Salmon and Soames 1988; Schiffer 2003). Here all I shall mean by ‘proposition’ is the content of an intentional state that is true or false. As we shall see, some philosophers think that all intentional content is propositional. Yet it seems to me that there are many intentional states whose contents are not assessable as true or false: for example, the object-directed attitudes of love and hate (see Crane 2001, §34; Montague forthcoming). Hence I reject the thesis that all intentional content is propositional. Although I will rely on this rejection later in the paper, I will not defend it further.

Another question about intentional content is whether it is *conceptual* or *non-conceptual*. A state of mind has conceptual content when a subject needs to possess the concepts definitive of its content in order to be in that state. Some philosophers have

claimed that certain experiences have non-conceptual content, and I agree. But it is not an debate which needs to be settled in this context.

### **3. Two kinds of intentionalism**

Having clarified the elements of intentionality, in this section I will consider how these elements are employed in different developments of intentionalism, the idea that consciousness is a form of intentionality. One development of intentionalism is the view that the conscious character of a state of mind is determined by its intentional content alone. Chalmers (2004) calls this view ‘pure representationalism’. I am indebted to Chalmers’s discussion, but in keeping with my terminological decision of section 1, I will call the view ‘pure intentionalism’.

Pure intentionalism about consciousness is standardly expressed in terms of a close relationship between the *phenomenal character* of a state of mind and the state’s *representational content*. A state has phenomenal character when there is something it is like to be in that state, while the representational content of a state is how it represents the world to be, and this is taken to be propositional (Byrne 2001, p. 7; Bain 2003, p. 507). Two versions of pure intentionalism are sometimes distinguished: *strong pure intentionalism*, which says that the phenomenal character of a mental state is identical with its representational content (see Tye 1995, p. 137), and *weak pure intentionalism*, which says that the phenomenal character of a state is determined by or supervenes on

its representational content (see Byrne 2001, p. 7; McLaughlin 2003; Kind forthcoming).

Taken literally, strong pure intentionalism is of dubious coherence. It says that the phenomenal character of an experience is identical with its representational content. The representational content of an experience, according to pure intentionalism, is a proposition. The phenomenal character of an experience is what it is like to have that experience. But how can *what it is like* to have an experience be identical to a *proposition*? Propositions are abstract objects—maybe Fregean thoughts, maybe modelled by sets of possible worlds or intensions or ordered  $n$ -tuples of objects and properties—and what it is like to have experience is (arguably) a feature of an experience, a concrete event. How can a feature of a concrete event be identical to an abstract proposition? If we are to take strong intentionalists at their word, their claim makes little sense.<sup>9</sup>

However, we should interpret the claim with a charitable pinch of salt. Let's instead understand strong pure intentionalists as saying that for an experience to have a certain phenomenal character simply is for it to have a certain intentional content. Strong pure intentionalists should not say that the phenomenal *character* is identical with the *content*; rather they should say that an experience's *having* phenomenal character is identical with its *having* a certain content. Weak pure intentionalism can then be expressed as follows: any two experiences which share intentional content will share phenomenal character. This is consistent with the identity claim made by strong pure intentionalists, but does not imply it since it allows that experiences could have

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<sup>9</sup> Here I am indebted to discussions with Barry Hall.

non-representational phenomenal properties which (for some reason) supervene on the experience's having the representational content it does. It seems to me that the distinction between strong and weak pure intentionalism is of little significance in the present context, and in what follows I will accordingly understand pure intentionalism as the weaker supervenience claim.

As noted, pure intentionalists tend to hold that all intentional content is propositional. Since I reject this thesis, this is one reason for rejecting pure intentionalism as usually understood. But maybe this thesis is not essential to pure intentionalism; it does not seem that there is anything in the essential idea behind pure intentionalism which implies that content must be propositional. So I want to concentrate here on a problem which is closer to the heart of pure intentionalism.

In a recent paper, David Bain (2003) defends the pure intentionalist view that the experience of pain represents damage to the body. Part of his defence involves addressing what he calls the 'distinctiveness' problem: how a pure intentionalist should characterise what is distinctive about pain sensations. At one point, he expresses this problem in terms of how one can distinguish between (for example) seeing that one's body is disordered and somatosensorily feeling the same thing:

The phenomenal difference between seeing disorder and somatosensorily feeling it cannot reside in the difference between the experiences' contents, since their contents do not differ—both represent disorder. (Bain 2003, p. 516)

Some pure intentionalists (e.g. Dretske 2000, p. 458) respond by insisting that such experiences *must* in fact differ in what they represent. Others (e.g. Tye 1995) say that

the contents of the experiences themselves have different natures (for example, the content of a somatosensory experience is non-conceptual). Bain's own view is that what is represented does not differ in these two cases, but that there is a difference in 'modes of presentation' (i.e. their Fregean content; Bain 2003, pp. 517–518).

These responses are really very similar: they all attempt to locate the differences in these experiences in their intentional contents. Yet it seems to me that there is a much simpler response available, which is unavailable to pure intentionalists like Bain and Tye (although it is quite within the spirit of their view). This simple response is that the difference between feeling one's leg to be damaged and seeing it to be damaged is just the difference between *feeling* and *seeing*. In other words, it is a difference in what Searle and I call *mode*, and what others would call *attitude*. We already know that sameness of content does not suffice for sameness of mental states in general; a belief and a hope might have the same content. So why should we expect that it suffices for sameness of phenomenal states, states which are distinguished by their phenomenal character?

As outlined in section 2 above, intentionality is directedness on an object, but there are three dimensions of variation in the ways one's states of mind might be directed upon an object: they may differ in their object, in their content and in their mode.<sup>10</sup> So since we know that, as a general rule, intentional states can differ in mode

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<sup>10</sup> Note: (i) mode is not Fregean mode of presentation, which is an element of the content of the state. Chalmers (2004) prefers his term 'manner' to my 'mode' because of the risk of confusion with 'mode of presentation.' (ii) To make this claim about modes or manners is not to agree with Lycan's (1996, p. 11) view that the functional role of a state of mind contributes towards its phenomenal character. To get here one would have to add the further claim that differences in mode are explained by differences in functional role; a plausible thesis but not one which follows from

even when they share content, it is surely only to be expected that differences in mode might make a difference to the phenomenal character of states of mind. The point is even easier to appreciate when we consider concrete examples: it should not be surprising, for example, that seeing that it is raining and hearing that it is raining have different phenomenal characters, since seeing and hearing are different conscious modes or attitudes. So the simple answer to Bain's question is that what distinguishes feeling that *one's body is damaged* and seeing that *one's body is damaged* is the fact that in one case the fact is apprehended by the faculty of eyesight, and in the other it is apprehended by the faculty of somatosensory perception. There may also be differences in content too; but the point is that there is an obvious uncontentious difference that pure intentionalists like Bain and Tye overlook. (Of course, this does not *explain* what makes the products of these faculties conscious, but neither does pure intentionalism explain this. Bain's question was about what *distinguishes* the conscious character of these experiences, not about what makes them conscious in the first place.) Bain considers this response, but rejects it on the grounds that admitting that mode or sense modality contributes to phenomenal differences is "to give up without a fight" (Bain 2003, p. 517). But this seems to put the cart before the horse. If we start off with an inclination in favour of intentionalism in general, perhaps inspired by the idea of unifying the phenomena of mind around the notion of a subject's point of view (see the next section) or inspired by Dretske's idea that 'all mental facts are representational facts' (see Dretske 1995, p. xiii), then one should have an open mind about whether all mental facts are fixed by *all* the intentional or representational facts (mode *plus* content

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intentionalism . Here I disagree with Block (2003); my sympathies are more with Jackson (2002), McLaughlin (2003) and O'Dea (forthcoming).

*plus* object) or whether they are fixed by content alone. A little reflection can show that all the intentional facts about a state of mind (including facts about mode) contribute towards fixing the phenomenal character. Moreover, saying this is not something which is in conflict with the motivation behind the general intentionalist view of the mind, as I shall explain in the next section.

Therefore I think we should reject pure intentionalism and deny that the phenomenal character of an experience is determined by its representational content alone.<sup>11</sup> The alternative way of developing the view that all mental states are intentional is what I call (following Chalmers 2004) *impure intentionalism*.<sup>13</sup> This says that the phenomenal character of an experience is determined by its entire intentional nature: in particular, by its mode and its content. The phenomenal character of an experience therefore supervenes on its intentional nature. There cannot be two experiences which are identical in their intentional nature but differ in their phenomenal character.

Note that both pure and impure intentionalism are actually strengthenings of the original claim (which I called ‘Brentano’s thesis’) that all mental states are intentional. For someone could hold that all mental states are intentional but nonetheless reject intentionalism and representationalism if they were to hold that two experiences could be identical in their intentional nature but differ in their non-intentional properties (sometimes called ‘qualia’). Call this the ‘qualia theory.’ The qualia theory might be considered a version of the view that all mental states are intentional, but one that stops

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<sup>11</sup> See Chalmers (2004) for an additional plausible argument against pure intentionalism.

<sup>13</sup> Terminology has really started to grow wild here: Byrne (2001) calls this view ‘inter-modal intentionalism,’ while Block (2003) calls it ‘quasi-representationism’.

short of intentionalism by holding that there are non-intentional properties which contribute to phenomenal character. Impure intentionalism, by contrast, insists on the determination of the phenomenal character of an experience by its intentional nature alone, and therefore implies the rejection of the qualia theory.<sup>14</sup>

So far we have only said what the doctrine of impure intentionalism is; we have not yet said anything about reasons for believing it. This will be the task of the next section.

#### **4. The motivation for impure intentionalism**

Impure intentionalism as a general thesis says that the entire mental character of a mental state is determined by its intentional nature. Resistance to pure and impure intentionalism comes primarily from those who think that there are aspects of conscious experience which are not determined by the intentionality of the experience; or even that there are conscious states which have no intentionality at all. Hence the defence of any form of intentionalism depends upon the defence of intentionalism about consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For the qualia theory, see Block (1990) and (2003). In Crane (2003), written in 1998, I called this version of the qualia theory a version of intentionalism ('weak' intentionalism). Since this theory does not say that phenomenal character is determined by intentionality, it now seems to me misleading to call this a form of intentionalism at all.

<sup>16</sup> Resistance might also come from a defender of a kind of 'higher-order thought' (HOT) theory of consciousness, which holds that bodily sensations (for example) are neither essentially intentional nor essentially conscious—they only become conscious when they are the objects of higher-order thoughts (see Rosenthal 1986). I find the view that sensations are not essentially conscious very implausible, and will not discuss it further here.

What positive reasons are there for believing that conscious states are entirely intentional at all? Pure intentionalists sometimes argue by appealing to what has come to be called the *transparency* of perceptual experience: that introspective reflection on a perceptual experience only reveals the external objects of experience and their features, and does not reveal intrinsic features of experiences themselves (Harman 1990; Tye 1995).

There has been much discussion of the transparency of experience in recent years (see Stoljar 2004; Martin 2002; Siewert 2003). Here I shall understand it as the combination of these two claims: (i) that reflection on a perceptual experience only reveals aspects of the objects of experience; and (ii) that reflection on a perceptual experience does not reveal aspects of the experience itself. The first claim is relatively uncontroversial, although it does raise the question of what a defender of transparency should say about objects of experience which do not exist (see Crane 2006-a; Johnston 2004). It is the second claim which is normally disputed by those who reject transparency. These philosophers claim that in certain cases—e.g. blurry vision—one can come to be aware of something more than how one is representing the world to be, or of the objects of experience. When one sees something in a blurry way, one does not necessarily represent the world as blurry. Hence the second transparency claim (ii) is false, and insofar as pure intentionalism implies this claim, pure intentionalism is false too.

There are, of course, pure intentionalist responses to this kind of objection (Tye 2000). But given that we have already rejected pure intentionalism (section 3), I will not pursue them here. Let's consider instead what someone might say who rejects pure intentionalism *and* the second transparency claim. There seem to be at least two

possibilities. The first is the impure intentionalist response: that blurry vision and other such phenomena are part of the intentional character of the experience, since phenomena like this can result from the particular intentional mode of the experience: it is the particular way of being aware of the world, the particular acuity of one's visual perception, which (in addition to its content) determines the phenomenal character of the experience. After all, individuals differ in their perceptual acuity; it is hardly surprising that this should affect the phenomenal character of the experience. The second view is the qualia theory: that blurry vision and other such phenomena result from experiences having certain non-intentional qualia, understood as properties which can vary independently of the intentional nature of an experience.

It can be rather hard to see what is at issue in the debate between these two views. One reason for this is that it is not always clear exactly what non-intentional qualia are supposed to be (for discussion, see Dennett 1988; Martin 1998). But what does seem to be clearly in dispute is the truth of the supervenience thesis: does fixing the intentional nature (mode and content) of the experience fix its phenomenal character? The impure intentionalist says yes, and the non-intentionalist says no (Block 1990, 1996). To sharpen the debate, then, perhaps we do not need a positive account of qualia. Rather, we only need treat non-intentionalism as a negative claim: the denial of the supervenience of phenomenal character on intentional nature. This puts the impure intentionalist on the defensive: they need to explain why intentional mode and content determine phenomenal character.

One thing which is inadequate about the mere appeal to transparency and introspection is that it does not help us understand *why* it is that experience is wholly intentional. If we want to know why it is that phenomenal character is determined by

intentional nature, then we don't just need a statement of what some philosophers take to be obviously true, we want some kind of understanding of the intrinsic connection between the idea of the intentional and the idea of phenomenal character. An analogy: it may well be that universal suffrage is a feature of all liberal democracies. Hence being a state with universal suffrage supervenes on being a liberal democracy. But merely stating the supervenience connection will not explain why this is so; what we need is some explanatory connection between the idea of liberal democracy and the idea of universal suffrage.

It will be helpful to return for a moment to pure intentionalism. Alex Byrne (2001) has provided a direct argument for pure intentionalism which does not simply appeal to either of the intuitions about transparency. Byrne's discussion is instructive, but it seems to me that his argument is ultimately unsuccessful. Nonetheless, a brief examination of the argument will indicate an underlying reason for believing in impure intentionalism.

Byrne aims to defend the weak pure intentionalist supervenience claim: sameness of intentional content implies sameness of phenomenal character. Hence if experiences differ in phenomenal character, they differ in content. He argues for this conclusion as follows:

- (1) If a (suitably idealised) subject has two consecutive experiences which differ in phenomenal character, then the subject will notice the difference;
- (2) If a subject notices a change in the phenomenal character of these experiences, then the way things seem to the subject will be different in each case;

- (3) But the way things seem to the subject is the content of the experience: if two experiences share a content then the way things seem is exactly the same in each experience;
- (4) Therefore if experiences differ in phenomenal character they differ in content.

The key move in this argument is the step between (2) and (3). The idea is that if the way things seem to the subject changes so does the content, since the way things seem to the subject just is the content of the experience.

Now it is certainly plausible to say that ‘the way things seem to the subject’ can be read as a synonym for the content of an experience. But someone who doubts the pure intentionalist supervenience claim can say that the ‘way things seem to the subject’ can be read in another way too: it can pick out aspects of the phenomenal character of the experience *itself*. It could be said that when one experiences something, the world seems a certain way to the subject; but in addition, having the *experience* also seems a certain way: ‘things’ covers both aspects of this seeming. Hence an opponent of the supervenience claim can say that the argument equivocates between stages (2) and (3): in (2) the phrase ‘the way things seem’ picks out the content *and* aspects of the experience itself, while in (3) it picks out simply the content. Byrne’s appealing argument therefore fails.

Nonetheless, there is something we can learn from the failure of this argument. What Byrne’s argument relies on is that in the case of perceptual experience at least, the notions of how things seem to the subject and how an experience represents the world to be are intimately intertwined. Suppose I am asked how things perceptually seem to

me now, and I give a description of this. Then suppose I am asked how my perceptual experience represents the world to be. It is reasonable to expect that I might give the same or a similar description (see Strawson 1979). Or rather, if I did, then I wouldn't obviously be failing to carry out the task asked of me. After all, how things seem to me in perceptual experience is at least a matter of how the world around me is experienced, and it is plausible (though not mandatory) to think of this world as *represented* by my experience.<sup>17</sup>

Someone might think that the descriptions *must* differ because 'how things seem to me' *must* refer to the 'seeming' itself and not what seems. But this would simply be a stipulation about how to use the phrase 'how things seem,' and would therefore be deliberately ignoring the ambiguity I have drawn attention to. I am not saying that when you describe how things seem to you, you should *only* describe the objects of experience. If I say, because I am short- (or near-) sighted, that a distant building looks blurred, I need not be describing the object as blurred. Rather, I am describing the object *and* how it seems to me. My point here is that describing accurately how things seem to you in perceptual experience will involve describing the objects of experience, even if it also involves other things as well. Byrne's argument trades on this fact. (The point is not just about the phrase 'how things seem': the same could be said for 'what it is like' and 'how it is with me'; see Martin 1998.)

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<sup>17</sup> Disjunctivists such as Martin (2002) will disagree; for them, the objects and properties we experience are not represented but instantiated in veridical perception. In Crane (2006-a) I discuss the difference between disjunctivism and intentionalism in terms of whether they think experience is representational. Here I am not providing an argument against disjunctivism, but describing the options for someone tempted by intentionalism.

Like Byrne, I have been talking about perception, and it may be thought that the situation is different where bodily sensations and some emotions are concerned. I will return to this question in the next section. But for the moment I would like to draw out what I see to be the moral of this discussion of Byrne's argument.

I have argued that Byrne's argument fails because the notion of *how things seem to the subject* may be read in two ways: as describing how the *world* seems to be and how the *experiencing* 'seems' to be, or what reflection on the experience itself yields. Hence the step from (2) to (3) equivocates. But the fact that the notion has these two readings is very significant for impure intentionalism. 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 arrangements of some 'blank' or 'blind' intrinsic properties; it is a description of a point of view *on something*. Already contained within 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. If you leave this out, you leave out part of what it is like for the subject, part of what makes the experience have the phenomenal character it does. This is why it is so easy for Byrne to move from talk about how things seem to the subject ('what it is like') to talk about the experience's representational content ('how it represents the world to be'). Of course, the move is very natural: for few these days will deny that what it is like to have an perceptual experience is partly a matter of how the

experience presents or represents the world to be.<sup>18</sup> Many of Byrne's opponents will accept this, but they will nonetheless deny the supervenience thesis.

However, the best explanation of the fact that the notions of how things seem and how things are represented to be are so close to one another, it seems to me, is that they have a common core. They describe what is captured at a more abstract level by the idea of intentionality. These notions which are so useful to us in characterizing what it is, phenomenologically speaking, to have an experience are in fact inextricable from the notion of intentionality. The notion of intentionality, properly understood, is the notion of something being presented to the mind, the notion of a state of mind having an object (or what Martin [1998] has called a 'subject-matter'). If experience involves things seeming a certain way, they must seem a certain way to a subject; seeming is always seeming to some subject. What is presented to the subject ('things') is the subject-matter of the experience. Hence things seeming a certain way in experience is a kind of intentionality: the intentionality of experience. Impure intentionalism gives a better description of this than pure intentionalism, since impure intentionalism can accommodate the way in which the 'seeming' itself can enter into the phenomenal character of the experience.

This is not supposed to be a demonstrative argument for impure intentionalism. What I have been trying to do is to motivate the application of the whole idea of intentionality from the two ideas appealed to by Byrne: *how things seem to the subject* and *how things are represented as being*. The ambiguity I noted in 'how things seem to

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<sup>18</sup> Hence it is very unnatural, as many recent philosophers (Siewert 1998; Chalmers 2004; McCulloch 2003; Horgan and Tienson 2002) have noted, to think that the notion of 'what it's like' only has application to the *qualia* of mental states, conceived of as non-intentional intrinsic properties.

the subject' is dismantled by impure intentionalism in terms of content ('how *things* seem') and mode ('how things *seem*'). It is true that I have not shown that Block's non-intentionalist construal of 'how things *seem*' in terms of qualia is *incoherent*. But I have shown how impure intentionalism would answer the non-intentionalist challenge.

There is a further reason for adopting impure intentionalism which has been proposed by a number of writers recently and which deserves brief discussion here. This is the view that a (pure *or* impure) intentionalist conception of mental phenomena will render them more amenable to a physicalist reduction (see Byrne 2001; Hellie 2002). According to a widespread view, there are two challenges which any physicalist account of mind faces: the reduction of content and the reduction of consciousness. An aspect of this widespread view is that while progress has been made in the attempt to reduce representational content—e.g. by explaining it in terms of information or causal co-variation—little progress has been made in reducing consciousness. While content is widely considered to be based on causal relations to the environment, there is almost no consensus about the physical basis of consciousness. Some see the advantage of (pure *or* impure) intentionalism as offering a way out of this deadlock (Byrne 2001, p. 7).

I am skeptical of this kind of motivation for intentionalism, for two reasons. First, I am sceptical about the prospects of reduction of intentionality. The fundamental doubts about misrepresentation which arose in the discussions of naturalized intentionality in the late 1980s have still not been answered (see Chalmers [2004] for a recent expression of scepticism). Second, even if prospects were better for a reductive account of intentionality than they actually are, this would not help with the problem of reducing consciousness, unless it were explained what it is about certain intentional states that made them conscious. Certain reductive pure intentionalist theories (like

Tye's [1995] so-called 'PANIC' theory) do attempt to address this question, by drawing attention to specific features of the intentional content of conscious states. But the difficulty here is that to the extent that there was an original worry about consciousness and its explanation, this worry will carry over to the pure intentionalist account in terms of representational content. For example, if the worry was that zombies seem to be possible, then (given the manifest possibility of non-conscious intentionality) this worry will arise even on a (pure or impure) intentionalist approach.

I doubt, then, whether intentionalism can really help a reductive account of mind. But as I see it, its appeal for reductionists is not the main reason for believing in intentionalism. The line of thought developed earlier in this section is a defence of intentionalism as a *phenomenological* thesis: a thesis about what it is like to be a subject of experience. As a phenomenological thesis, intentionalism offers the prospect of a unitary account of states of mind, an account which explains the unity of our concept of mind. Our concept of mind, on this account, essentially involves the concept of a subject's point of view on the world. The essence of intentionality is having such a point of view. There are those who are sceptical about the unity of the concept of mind. But given the connections just drawn between phenomenal character and intentionality, the burden is now upon them to explain why intentionality is not the mark of the mental. In the final section of this paper, I will consider what some claim to be the strongest objections to this thesis.

## **5. Sensations and moods**

The general thesis that intentionality is the mark of the mental has been denied on the grounds that there are clear cases of mental states which have no objects. The examples

normally offered (e.g. by Searle 1983, p. 1) are bodily sensations and certain emotions or moods. Let us examine these supposed counterexamples more closely, taking pain as our paradigm of a bodily sensation.

A non-intentionalist account of pain is one which says either that pain has no intentionality or that it is not exhausted by whatever intentionality it may have. On these views, the phenomenal character of pain is wholly or partly characterised by its non-intentional qualitative properties or qualia. Many non-intentionalists have come to accept that insofar as they are felt to have a location, pains exhibit *some* intentionality.<sup>19</sup> But they insist that there is more to these experiences than their intentionality: they also have their characteristic qualia.

Pure and impure intentionalists resist this, normally on the grounds that the notion of qualia is obscure and ill-defined. But it is not enough to say this; they also have to explain what it means for a pain or a mood to be an intentional state.

Some pure intentionalists (Tye 1995; Bain 2003) have argued that the representational content of a pain in a part of one's body is that the part of the body is damaged or otherwise disturbed or disordered (the view derives from Armstrong 1968). The view has a number of advantages, not least of which is the way it connects the representational content of pain to its manifest function of alerting an organism to harm which has been done to its body. But nonetheless it seems to me that the view cannot be correct. The main reason is that it is phenomenologically implausible, and the task we are engaged in here is a phenomenological one. Although there might well be cases where an experience of pain in a part of the body seems also to be an experience of

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<sup>19</sup> Even Searle (1991, p. 251) accepts this. For further criticism of the non-intentionalist views of pain, see Crane (1998, §2), and Grahek (2001).

damage to that part, there are also many cases where it does not. There is nothing in an experience of a headache which connotes damage to the subject, and it would be entirely irrational for the subject to conclude that his head was damaged purely on the basis of a headache. (To insist that nonetheless the headache is experienced as a *disorder* in the head may be true, but it hardly helps the thesis unless we know what kind of disorder it is, which is what the idea of ‘damage’ was meant to do for us. The mere idea of disorder is surely too unspecific to single out what is distinctive of the phenomenal character of pain.)

To this kind of criticism, Tye (1995) responds that the content of the pain experience is ‘non-conceptual’ and this is why an experience of pain does not connote damage to the subject. But the non-conceptual character of this experience does not seem to be relevant here. For suppose the experience does have a non-conceptual content in the way that it has been claimed that visual experience has a non-conceptual content. In the visual case, the differences between colours which are supposed to be non-conceptually represented are themselves phenomenologically salient (Evans 1982). But our criticism of the damage/injury theory is that damage is often not phenomenologically salient at all, conceptually or not. Tye might respond that the ‘damage’ proposal is meant to be one about ‘sub-personal’ information processing below the level of consciousness. But this would then be changing the subject; he would not in this case be offering an account of the conscious character of the experience.

We should, I think, reject the pure intentionalist idea that the content of pains must be characterized in terms of damage. And as we saw above, the pure intentionalist view that phenomenal character is wholly determined by the content of an experience is independently implausible. So an intentionalist account of pain should rather explain the

phenomenal character of pain in terms of three things: intentional mode, intentional content and intentional object, where these do not involve a representation of damage to the body.

On the picture I recommend, the intentional *object* of a pain is the felt location of the pain, the part or region of the body which hurts. Treating the location or apparent location of a pain as its intentional object allows us to say, as in other cases of intentionality, that the intentional object of a pain transcends the experience itself, and might in certain cases not exist, or not be real. (For example, this is how we should treat the case of a phantom limb.)

The intentional *content* of the pain is the representation of its felt location. This representation is always representation in a certain way or under a certain aspect. For example, if one feels that one has a pain in one's arm, the arm is the intentional object of the experience, and its content is the representation of one's arm *as one's own*. This is the 'aspect' under which it is experienced. It might be possible in certain pathological cases for someone to feel a pain in their arm even when they did not recognize the pain as being in their own arm. This would not be to experience one's arm under the same aspect; it would be not be an experience with the same content. (Notice that a view which said that pain is simply a representation of damage to one's arm might have difficulty in distinguishing these two experiences.)

The intentional *mode* is the relation—or apparent relation, a form of representation—in which the body part or region stands to the subject of the experience. It is such a relation which we generically call 'hurting'—it is my leg which hurts, that is, it hurts *me*. Of course, there are many different ways in which something can hurt. So the term 'hurt' can pick out different intentional modes in different cases; in any

particular case, the hurting will have a distinct intensity and phenomenal character.

Hence the intensity of a pain should not be thought of so much as a property of the pain, but rather as a determination of an intentional mode.<sup>20</sup> According to impure intentionalism, the same is true of all bodily sensations—although much more needs to be said about the phenomenal character of these sensations to give a full defence of impure intentionalism.

Turning now to the second supposed counterexample to intentionalism—the cases of supposedly objectless feelings, moods or emotions—we find a topic which is much less widely discussed than pain, and much less well-understood, philosophically and empirically. Everyone should accept that there are emotions which have intentional objects. But some say that there are also feelings or moods which have no objects at all: one might feel generally gloomy, for example, without being gloomy about anything in particular (Dretske 1995, p. xv). What should a (pure or impure) intentionalist say about such phenomena?

In some cases, although it might not be immediately obvious what the intentional object of a mood is, it may have an object which is revealed by further examination. So it is with those moods whose objects are their causes. For example, you might feel generally irritated and it not be clear to you what you are irritated about, but only on reflection do you realize that it is the presence of your aged relative who is both the cause and the object of the irritation. So it is, too, with another kind of case: those moods whose objects can only be characterized in the most generalized way. A mood of depression can have as its object ‘things in general’ or ‘everything,’ a point underlined

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<sup>20</sup> Here I am especially indebted to discussion with A.W. Price.

by the important commonplace that the depressed person and the non-depressed person live in different worlds.<sup>21</sup>

Further reflection on this kind of case opens up the possibility of a slightly different approach. One way of spelling out what is meant by saying that the depressed and the non-depressed ‘live in different worlds’ is to say that a mood like depression can be something which affects a subject’s entire mental condition: not just every conscious episode of thought and experience, but the subject’s motivation, imagination and action are all permeated with the mood. In this kind of case, then, perhaps we should not think of the mood as an individual mental state in its own right, so to speak, but rather as a commonality among all the mental states of someone experiencing such a mood. In general, it is plausible that every conscious episode of thought, perception or desire has a certain affective ‘colouring’ to it. Objects are presented to us as meaningful in various ways, and part of this meaning is their affective significance: objects can seem loveable, valuable, in need of care, frightening or nauseating. This can be, depending on the case in question, an aspect of their content or an aspect of their intentional mode. If this is so, then we can see how it might be that an aspect might be common across many different mental states, how such an aspect might give a thoroughly negative colouring to all one’s experiences, and how we might generalize across this aspect by calling it a mood of depression. A mood like this might therefore be a general way in which experience might be modified, a way which can be common across many different kinds of mental episodes.

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<sup>21</sup> For more on the intentionality of moods, see Goldie (2000, pp. 143–151) and Crane (1998, §3).

To what extent each recognisable mood fits into one of the intentionalist classifications discussed is something which will need further investigation. The category of the emotions (including moods) is a category in which it is crucial to pay attention to individual differences between the mental phenomena in question. It may be unlikely that one general theory will apply to all the things we recognize as emotions. But nonetheless we have found no good reason to think that there are emotions which lack intentional objects altogether.

## **6. Conclusion**

The general idea that intentionality is the ‘mark’ of the mental can be developed in a number of ways. Different developments will differ in what they say about intentionality, but also in what they say about consciousness—since as I argued above, the general idea only becomes controversial where consciousness is involved. In this paper I have considered two such developments: the pure intentionalist thesis that the phenomenal character of a conscious state of mind is determined by its representational or intentional content; and the impure intentionalist thesis that the phenomenal character of a conscious state is determined by its intentional content and its intentional mode. I argued for the phenomenological superiority of impure intentionalism. In addition, there seems no good motivation for pure pure intentionalists to insist on their conclusion. The guiding idea behind pure intentionalism—captured in Dretske’s slogan that ‘all facts

about the mind are representational facts' — can be better developed by the impure intentionalist than by the pure intentionalist.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Thanks to Katalin Farkas, Hong Yu Wong and Dan Zahavi for discussion, and to Mario De Caro and Alfredo Paternoster for their helpful comments at the first meeting of the Italian Society for Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Calabria in June 2006. This paper was written with the support of the EU 6<sup>th</sup> framework NEST project, REFCOM.

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