

Introspection, intentionality and the transparency of experience¹

Tim Crane
University College London

1. Introspection and phenomenal character

How much can introspection tell us about the nature of perceptual experience? This partly depends on what we understand by 'the nature of perceptual experience'. It is hardly to be expected that introspection could tell us, for example, whether our experiences are brain states, or supervene on brain states; this is something which must be decided on the basis of broad metaphysical and empirical considerations. But one might expect that introspection could tell us a lot about what has come to be called the *phenomenal character* of experience; that is, what it is like to have the experience, or how the experience is from the subject's point of view. This much should be uncontroversial. The question I want to address in this paper is to what extent introspection can determine the correct theoretical *account* of phenomenal character.²

Some philosophers have argued recently that introspective evidence provides direct support for an intentionalist theory of visual experience. An intentionalist theory of visual experience treats experience as an intentional state, a state with an intentional content. (I shall use the word 'state' in a general way, for any kind of mental phenomenon, and here I shall not distinguish states proper from events, though the distinction is important.) Intentionalist theories characteristically say that the phenomenal character of an experience, what it is like to have the experience, is exhausted by its intentional content. Visual experience, and on some views sense-experience generally, does not involve the awareness of 'qualia', intrinsic, non-intentional features of the experience. According to Gilbert Harman and Michael Tye, support for this view comes from introspecting on experience. Tye describes his 'argument from introspection' as follows:

Standing on the beach in Santa Barbara a couple of summers ago on a bright sunny day, I found myself transfixed by the intense blue of the Pacific Ocean. Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn't this show that there are visual qualia?

I am not convinced. It seems to me that what I found so pleasing in the above instance, what I was focusing on, as it were, were a certain shade and intensity of the colour blue. I experienced blue as a property of the ocean not as a property of my experience. My experience itself certainly wasn't blue. Rather, it was an experience which represented the ocean as blue. What I was really delighting in, then, were specific aspects of the content of the experience.

Tye goes on to suggest that this might have been the sort of thing Moore meant when he said that the sensation of blue is 'diaphanous', and glosses this as follows:

When one tries to focus on it in introspection one cannot help but see right through it so that what one actually ends up attending to is the real colour blue.³

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²It will help to make the following terminological stipulations: (i) a state of mind has *phenomenal character* when there is something it is like to be in that state; (ii) a state of mind is *qualitative* when it is a sensory state; (iii) *qualia* are hypothesized intrinsic, non-intentional features of mental states, whose instantiation is postulated by certain theories to explain the phenomenal character of qualitative states. Sometimes the word 'qualia' is used as a term for any qualitative feature of experience. But I use the term solely for non-intentional phenomenal features. See further my paper, 'The origins of qualia' in Tim Crane and Sarah Patterson (eds.) *History of the Mind-Body Problem* (London: Routledge 2000).

³Michael Tye, 'Visual qualia and visual content' in Tim Crane (ed.) *The Contents of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992) p.160. See also Gilbert Harman, 'The intrinsic quality of experience' in J. Tomberlin (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives* 4 (Atascadero: Ridgeview

Whether or not this is what Moore had in mind is a moot point.⁴ But I shall not pursue this historical issue here. I am interested in the phenomenological claim Tye is making in this passage, a claim which has come to be called the 'transparency of experience' – visual experience is 'transparent' because one 'sees right through it' to the object itself.

Tye's claim about seeing the blue of the ocean is that introspection reveals only represented facts about the ocean; that it is blue. The thesis of the Transparency of experience is a generalization from this kind of example: all introspection can reveal are facts about the content of the experience (how things are represented to be) or represented facts about the object of experience (what is represented or presented in the experience). The thesis is initially plausible. When I introspect my current perceptual experience of the oak tree in the garden, I do not seem to attend to my experience, but rather to the tree and the way it looks. The way it looks is the content of my experience; but I learn about the content of the experience by turning my attention to the tree. The further claim is that what introspection thus reveals exhausts the phenomenal character of the experience.

Despite its initial plausibility, I shall argue here that the transparency of experience is false. However, this is not because I reject intentionalism; on the contrary, I believe that properly formulated, intentionalism is correct. But it turns out that the best version of intentionalism must deny the transparency of experience. One way to appreciate why this is so is to focus on the examples which opponents of transparency (e.g. Ned Block) have offered as counter-examples to intentionalism: blurry vision, after-images and the like. These seem to be cases where there is more to the phenomenal character of the experience than reflection on its intentional content would reveal. The fact that there is this disagreement at all raises an interesting question: if Tye supports his intentionalism by arguing from what is obvious from introspection, and Block opposes this, it seems that they are disagreeing about what is obvious. But given that the kinds of experiences they have do not differ significantly, how can this disagreement about the obvious be a serious matter for debate? I will not pursue this question here.⁵ Rather, I will try and resolve the debate between Block and the intentionalist by showing why intentionalism does not entail the transparency of experience. It turns out then that the supposed counterexamples can be accommodated by intentionalists.

In the next section of the paper, I give a brief introduction to intentionalism. In section 3 I outline the familiar reasons for thinking that perception is intentional. In section 4 I show why the preferred understanding of intentionalism does not entail the transparency claim, and moreover why a correct account of the phenomenal character of experience needs to deny it. In the final section, I contrast my preferred form of intentionalism with Block's account of experience, and I give reasons to think mine is preferable.

2. Intentionality and intentionalism

In order to motivate the separation of the transparency of experience from intentionalism, I need to introduce the concept of intentionality in a rather abstract, general way. I begin with the thought that intentionality is 'directedness on an object': an intentional state has an object, that on which it is directed. The object of an intentional state is called an intentional object. 'Object' here does not mean *thing*, as it does in the phrase 'physical object'. Its meaning is rather the same as the meaning of 'object' in the phrases, 'object of experience' or 'object of attention'. That 'object' does not mean *thing* can be shown by the fact that we can replace the word 'object' in the phrase 'physical object' with the word 'thing' while preserving sense; but replacing 'object' with 'thing' in the phrase 'intentional object' arguably changes sense, and destroys sense when applied to the phrase 'object of experience'.⁶ If we take this kind of point seriously, then I suggest we should not think of intentional objects (or objects of experience) as being a kind of entity, the sort of thing of which one might have a theory – as one might have a theory of abstract objects. Rather, talking in terms of intentional objects is another way of expressing the fact that intentional states involve directedness, another way of saying that there is an answer to questions like 'what are you thinking about?', 'what do you want?', 'what are you looking for?' or 'what are you looking at?' and so on. (This shows additionally

1990), reprinted in Ned Block, Owen Flanagan and Guven Guzeldere (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1997). Page references to the reprint.

⁴ M.G.F. Martin, 'The transparency of experience', forthcoming.

⁵ But for some discussion, see Martin, 'The transparency of experience' and Crane, 'The origins of qualia'.

⁶ See J.J. Valberg 'The puzzle of experience' in Tim Crane (ed.) *The Contents of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992) p.22.

that intentional objects need not be particulars; the answers to these questions could provide entities from many different ontological categories.)

This way of using the phrase 'intentional object' is intended to avoid the puzzles which Harman and others mention about the nature of intentional objects.⁷ Talk of intentional objects is just a way of talking, which a proper theory of intentionality will explain not by giving some metaphysical account of these mysterious objects, which may or may not exist, but rather by (in part) drawing attention to earlier uses of 'object' and 'objective' from which the idea of an intentional object derives (for example: Descartes's idea of the 'objective reality' of ideas). It is, I claim, a useful way of talking, insofar we also find phrases of the form 'what X is thinking about' or 'what X wants' useful ways of talking (which we do). The idea of an intentional object, or the object of an intentional state, is just the most general determinable idea of which these other ideas – what someone is thinking about, what they are wanting, what they are seeing – are more specific determinates.

Since one can think of what does not exist, then it follows that not all intentional objects exist. So if one were to agree with the orthodox view that there are no things which do not exist, this gives another reason for thinking that 'x is an intentional object' is not a predicate true of a certain class of entities. Added to the equally orthodox view that a relation entails the existence of its relata, this yields the conclusion that intentional states cannot be relations to intentional objects. If intentional states were relations to intentional objects, then all intentional objects must exist; in other words, it would not be possible to answer the question 'what are you thinking about?' with a term which failed to refer. But since this is possible, intentional states are not relations to intentional objects.

However, one can hold this while holding that intentional states do nonetheless have a relational structure, that they are not intrinsic. For every intentional state has an intentional *content*, and all intentional contents of intentional states exist. The simplest way to introduce the idea of intentional content is through the familiar example of belief. Every belief is a belief that something is the case. This something, *what* is believed, the proposition, is the kind of thing I am calling the intentional content. Even when the intentional object of a state does not exist, the belief state must always have an intentional content, and therefore can be considered to be a relation to that content, since the same content can be the content of different types of intentional states.

The relation between content and object is somewhat like (though not the same as) the relation between sense and reference in a Fregean theory of meaning. To one intentional object there can correspond many contents, the different ways in which thinkers are apprehending the objects. Intentional content is therefore *fine-grained*. This is because every intentional state has what I call (following John Searle) *aspectual shape*: it presents its object under one aspect rather than another.⁸ 'Aspectual shape' is intended to be the most general, least theoretical way of describing the phenomenon in question; Frege's theory of sense and reference may be considered a theory which attempts to accommodate the aspectual shape involved in meaning. (This assumption that all intentional states have aspectual shape will be controversial to some of those who believe in *de re* thoughts; but the issue is orthogonal to the main theme of this paper, so I will not defend it here.)

Intentional states are therefore relations, relations to contents. Where propositional content is involved – that is, content assessable as true or false – thinker could relate to a content by standing in the relation of believing it to be true, or considering whether it is true, or hoping it is true, and so on. So to fix the nature of an intentional state, two things must be fixed: the intentional content and the relation in which the thinker stands to the content. Again following Searle, I call this relation the intentional *mode*.⁹ So for a belief that *p*, *p* is the intentional content, and belief is the mode. (I have chosen the example of belief, because it is such a familiar example of an intentional state. But note that I am not assuming here that all intentional states have *propositional* content, that they are all propositional attitudes.) This is the general character of an intentional state; anything which is an intentional state must have this structure.¹⁰

That, in brief, is what I am assuming about intentionality; now to intentionalism. Intentionalism comes in various forms. The most general or unrestricted form of intentionalism says that all mental states are intentional, even those which have not traditionally been regarded as such (bodily sensations, certain kinds of moods and emotions).

⁷ See Harman, 'The intrinsic quality of experience' p.666.

⁸ See John R. Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1992) p.155.

⁹ See John R. Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983) p.6.

¹⁰ I develop these ideas about intentionality in more detail in chapter 1 of *Elements of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

To say that they are all intentional is just to say that they have the relational structure (subject – mode – content) just discussed. This is Brentano's thesis that intentionality is the mark of the mental. But one could also hold a more restricted form of intentionalism which only applied to a certain kind of mental state: say, perception or sensation. The concern of the present paper is with intentionalism about perception. One could, however, hold intentionalism about perception without holding unrestricted intentionalism about all mental states. (An intentionalist about perception could believe that sensations are not intentional, for instance.)¹¹

Within this classification, a further distinction can be made between what I shall call *weak* and *strong* intentionalism. A weak intentionalist (about all mental states, or about perception, or whatever) thinks that all mental (or perceptual etc.) states are intentional, but some also have non-intentional mental properties (qualia). So for example, someone might think that all perceptual experiences have intentional content, but that they also have qualia. The phenomenal character of an experience is not exhausted by its intentionality. This view is defended by Christopher Peacocke, and has also been the focus of some of Sydney Shoemaker's recent work.¹² A strong intentionalist (about all mental states, or about perception, or whatever) thinks that the only mental properties of an experience are its intentional properties. Tye is a strong intentionalist about all mental states, as are Fred Dretske and William Lycan.¹³ Their views differ in various ways, and they also differ from the form of strong intentionalism I am defending here, in a way that will become apparent. Weak intentionalism and strong intentionalism are themselves distinguished from non-intentionalism, which says that some mental states are intentional, and some are not. I will not engage directly with this view in this paper; the argument will be with those who think that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is not determined by its intentionality. Weak intentionalism about experience is the weakest version of this idea; indeed, non-intentionalism about perceptual experience is barely plausible.

Two final clarifications are needed before proceeding to the next section. First, intentionalism is not functionalism. To believe that all mental states are intentional is not *ipso facto* to believe that all mental states can be given a functionalist analysis, or to believe that there is a functional structure to these states that psychology will reveal. One could believe this, as an intentionalist, but one need not do so. (Whether a functionalist about experience has to be an intentionalist is a somewhat more delicate question which we need not consider here; our interest is in what intentionalism entails, not functionalism.) For all that has been said about intentionality so far, intentionalism is compatible with non-functionalist dualism (indeed, it is arguable that Descartes was a kind of intentionalist about sensation).

It is true that Harman introduced intentionalism in his original paper as part of a defence of functionalism against objections from the supposed intrinsic quality of experience.¹⁴ But all this means is that intentionalism provides an independent reason to reject certain arguments against functionalism; it does *not* mean that there is an entailment from the one to the other. It is also true that certain philosophers favour intentionalism because it seems to them that the intentional stands a better chance of being reduced to the functional/physical than the 'qualitative' does.¹⁵ So it might be said that while there is some prospect of reducing the intentional to the physical, there is no chance of reducing the supposedly non-intentional qualia to the physical; so if the qualia can be shown to be really intentional underneath, then progress will be made. I share neither the underlying physicalism of this view nor the confidence in the prospects of a physicalist reduction of intentionality. But here I want only to point out that this motivation is detachable from intentionalism as I am conceiving it. As I am conceiving it, intentionalism is a thesis about the individuation and phenomenology of states of mind from a perspective which is neutral on the question of physicalist or functionalist reduction.

¹¹ A useful classification of varieties of intentionalism can be found in Alex Byrne, 'Intentionalism defended' (forthcoming) with which I am largely in agreement, and from which I borrow the term 'unrestricted intentionalism'. I defend intentionalism about bodily sensation in 'The intentional structure of consciousness' in A. Jokic and Q. Smith, *Aspects of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press forthcoming).

¹² See Christopher Peacocke, *Sense and Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983) chapter 1; Sydney Shoemaker, 'Qualia and consciousness' *Mind* 100, 1991, 507-524.

¹³ See Michael Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1995), Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1995) and W.G. Lycan, *Consciousness and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1997).

¹⁴ See Harman, 'The intrinsic quality of experience' p.663.

¹⁵ Tye, 'Visual qualia and visual content' p.175, seems to think so.

Second, intentionalism about perception is not externalism. To believe that one's experience has a content which represents the world as being a certain way is not to say that one could not have had that experience if the world did not contain certain objects, nor to say that the existence of one's experience is metaphysically dependent on certain social or environmental facts, nor to say that the experience does not supervene on the intrinsic physical properties of the experiencer - these are all various forms of externalism; whichever one you pick, I claim that it is independent of intentionalism. Intentionalism and externalism are distinct issues. They would only be essentially connected if internalist intentionality were incoherent. But it is not.¹⁶ Internalists can believe in intentionality as much as externalists can; they differ only in the extent to which the existence of intentional states requires something of the environment. As a strong intentionalist about visual experience, I can believe that my experience presents the world as being a certain way, without having any commitment at all to the idea that certain general features of the world need to exist in order for this experience to have this content.

As with intentionalism and functionalism, it is true that some philosophers see their intentionalism as deeply bound up with their externalism (this is especially true of Dretske, for instance). But this is because they are independently committed to externalism as a theory of mental content, and they therefore find it hard to dissociate their theory of experience from their general theory of content. However, we should insist on separating these issues so long as internalist intentionality is a coherent idea.

Having said something about what intentionality and intentionalism are, we can now approach our main topic, the intentionality of visual perception.

3. The intentionality of perception

I said above that non-intentionalism about visual experience was barely plausible. Why? The simple answer is that it is an evident fact that visual experience presents us, or purports to present us, with objects and properties. That is, it seems evident that perceptions have objects, that these objects seem to be distinct from the perceiver, and that these objects at least partly determine the phenomenal character of the experience. It is hard to take seriously a view which treats the phenomenology of visual perception as involving the mere stimulation of the eyes from which one has to 'infer', by using one's cognitive faculties, the nature of things outside of oneself. Perhaps this is a more plausible view of the sense of touch, but where visual experience is concerned, it has no future.

But wasn't one of the debates in the philosophy of perception earlier this century precisely about whether perception was a form of awareness of mind-independent objects, or whether it was awareness of mind-dependent objects, or *sense-data*? Yes; but the important contrast here is between 'mind-dependent' and 'mind-independent'. The fundamental motivation for sense-datum theories, the thing that theorists such as G.E. Moore and H.H. Price claimed could not be denied, was that experience presents something, that something is given to the mind in experience, that experience appears to be relational.¹⁷ This was the starting point for sense-datum theories: the idea of the given. The next step was to decide on the exact nature of what is given. The arguments from illusion and hallucination were supposed to show that what is given in experience cannot be a public, mind-independent object, since the experience would remain the same even if there were no such object there. So, they concluded, the experience must be an awareness of a mind-dependent object, an object whose existence depended on the existence of the state of mind in question.

To formulate this argument in such a way as to make it at all plausible, we need to add more assumptions, some of which are controversial. For example: the argument relies on the assumption that when one experiences that something is F, there is something F which one is experiencing (this is what Howard Robinson calls 'the phenomenal principle').¹⁸ No-one who is skeptical of the idea that the object of experience must be a real existing object would accept such a principle. But I will not pursue this argument here, since my point is not to make a case for or against sense-data theories. My point is rather that the core of the sense-data approach was the idea that experiences have objects, mind-dependent though they be. In this sense, the sense-datum theory is a form of intentionalism as described above: the

¹⁶ For a spirited recent defence of internalist intentionality, see Gabriel Segal, *A Slim Book about Narrow Content* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2000).

¹⁷ See my 'The origins of qualia' section 2 for discussion of this aspect of sense-data theories. See also M.G.F. Martin, 'J.L. Austin: *Sense and Sensibilia* revisited' (in M.G.F. Martin and M.W.F. Stone (eds.) *The Problem of Perception* London: Routledge forthcoming) for an illuminating discussion of Austin's critique of the sense-data theory, to which I am indebted.

¹⁸ Howard Robinson, *Perception* (London: Routledge 1994) p.32.

experience involves direction upon an object, and the nature of the experience is determined by the nature of its object. According to the way I am thinking of intentionality, sense-data theories are intentionalist theories, as are the traditional direct realist theories (or their contemporary counterparts, disjunctivist theories). This is because they all involve the two essential components of intentionality: directedness and aspectual shape.

So would any theory of perception deny that perception is intentional? Despite the very general conception of intentionality with which I am working, there is an approach to perception which is not intentional even in this general sense. This is the adverbial theory, which holds that visually experiencing a blue object is to be understood as visually experiencing blue-ly: the predicates which other theories take as picking out properties of perceived objects are here interpreted as adverbial modifications of the perceptual verb.¹⁹ In other words, the qualities of the objects of perception are really qualities of the perceptual state itself. Experiencing something F is a matter of having one's experience modified in certain ways: experiencing F-ly. The view arose as a response to what were seen to be the metaphysical excesses of the sense-datum theory: rather than committing ourselves to strange objects, we commit ourselves only to properties of experiences. But this fact in turn brings out the deepest weakness of the theory: that it is unable to account for the fact that the phenomenal character of visual perceptual states is, at the very least, the experience of a spatially arrayed arrangement of objects and properties, which cannot be captured in the adverbial reconstructions of the normal ways of describing perception.²⁰ As M.G.F. Martin puts it, perceptions have a *subject-matter*: this is the basis of the intentionalist conception I am recommending here, and this feature is shared by sense-datum theories and traditional direct realism, whatever their other differences.

Given the rejection of the adverbial theory, the question about perception then, is not whether to be an intentionalist, but what kind of intentionalist to be.²¹ What I am calling traditional direct realism is the view which the sense-data theories traditionally saw as their opponent: the view that we are directly aware of objects as they are in reality. ('Directly' needs to be explained; for present purposes we can take it simply to rule out the perception of something by means of perceiving something else.) The question which the sense-data theory put to direct realism was: what kind of account of hallucination can it give? How can it explain the apparent possibility that an experience could be phenomenally exactly the same, even though its object does not exist? The answer given by contemporary disjunctivists like John McDowell is that the fact that the experience seems the same does not necessarily make it a mental state of the same kind. Perceiving an F is one kind of state which requires the actual presence of an F before one's mind; hallucinating an F, when no such F exists, is altogether a different kind of state. Thus the claim that it visually appears to John that there is a glass of wine in front of him could *either* be a report of a genuine perception which John is having of the glass of wine, *or* a mere appearance, a hallucination (hence 'disjunctive').²²

These days the dominant form of intentionalism is the kind discussed in section 1 above, which I shall call 'standard intentionalism'. This view rejects an assumption shared by the sense-data, direct realist and disjunctivist theories, that when one perceives that an object has a certain perceptible property, then *there is* an actual object which exists which one is perceiving. (Whether the object has to have that property is a further question; the sense-data theories say no, the other theories typically say that one can perceive an object while still misperceiving its properties.) Standard intentionalism denies this assumption by drawing attention to the parallel between perception and other intentional states. In the case of belief, for example, a principle like the phenomenal principle is plainly invalid. No-one thinks that it

¹⁹For the adverbial theory, see R. Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall 1977) pp.26-30; W. Sellars, 'The adverbial theory of the objects of sensation' *Metaphilosophy* 6, 1975, 144-160.

²⁰See Frank Jackson, 'The existence of mental objects' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13, 1976, 23-40; reprinted in Jonathan Dancy (ed.) *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988) especially pp.119-124; and Robinson, *Perception* chapter 7, §§5-10; see also the discussion of adverbialism in M.G.F. Martin, 'Setting things before the mind' in A. O'Hear (ed.) *Current Issues in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998) especially pp.172-173.

²¹ Here I depart from M.G.F. Martin's classification of theories, at least in terminology, in 'Perceptual content' in S. Guttenplan (ed.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Blackwell 1994).

²² See John McDowell, 'Criteria, defeasibility and knowledge' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68, 1982, 455-479; reprinted in Dancy (ed.) *Perceptual Knowledge*; and in McDowell, *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998).

could be a general constraint on belief that if someone believes that *a is F*, then there is something *a* which they believe to be *F*. Of course, neither a sense-data theorist like Robinson, nor a disjunctivist like McDowell will claim that this is a constraint; their point is that the fact that there is this kind of constraint in the case of perception while there isn't in the case of belief is one of the things that shows why perception is so different from belief. Standard intentionalism disagrees: the best way to accommodate the possibility of hallucination is to show how perception is a form of intentionality similar in certain ways to belief; in particular, just as one can have a belief about *X* when *X* does not exist, so one can perceive *X* when *X* does not exist. (*X* is an 'intentional object'.) And we have reason to think, against the disjunctivist, that one's state of mind is the same regardless of the existence of the object. In short, if perception is a representation of the world, then it can represent objects in the world correctly or incorrectly, and can even represent the world as containing something which it does not.

There is much more to be said, of course, about the dispute between standard intentionalism and its opponents. But I will not pursue the matter here, since my concern now, having established the intentionality of perception, is to address a dispute among standard intentionalists, among those who think that perception is representational in the sense just indicated. This is the debate between strong intentionalists, who think that the phenomenal character of an experience is exhausted by its intentionality, and weak intentionalists who deny that the intentionality of an experience exhausts its phenomenal character. Weak intentionalists do think that visual experience has intentionality, but they think that experiences also have qualia. This debate is often fought over the question of the transparency of experience. This is the topic of the next section.

4. The transparency of experience

Tye's argument from introspection (section 1 above) invites us to consider a paradigmatic visual experience of something blue, and invites us to agree with him that 'when one tries to focus on [the experience] in introspection one cannot help but see right through it so that what one actually ends up attending to is the real colour blue'. So expressed, the point is plausible. But what does 'see right through' the experience mean?

There are two things it could mean. The first is fairly literal, and uncontroversial. It is that in the kinds of cases under consideration, when one sees something blue one does not see it by first seeing something else. One's visual experience 'gets right out' to the blue thing itself. This will be uncontroversial even to a sense-datum theorist who thinks that the blue thing one is seeing is a blue sense-datum. Even a weak intentionalist can agree that one does not literally *see* the qualia of one's experience; one sees the blue thing, it seems to be blue, but in seeing this one's experience has qualia. This is the weak intentionalist view. A weak intentionalist will not say that an experience cannot directly concern its normal objects. So this cannot be what the transparency of experience really amounts to.

The question is rather, whether the encounter with the object and its colour is *all* that is given in introspection of the experience. The second reading of 'see right through the experience' is meant to express the idea that this is *all* that is given to introspection. According to this second reading, one sees right through an experience in the sense that introspection of the experience only reveals awareness of the objects of the experience and their properties. So any phenomenal difference in experiences must be a difference in the objects of the experience and their properties. This is something that a weak intentionalist will deny. The weak intentionalist typically appeals to two kinds of case: reflection on possible cases, like the inverted spectrum or inverted earth thought-experiments; and reflection on actual phenomena within our experience, such as blurry vision, seeing double, spots before the eyes and so on. Here I will only discuss the actual phenomena; the inverted spectrum/earth thought experiments need independent treatment.²³

My approach to these apparent counterexamples is guided by the following simple thought, arising from the discussion of the nature of intentionality in section 2 above. If intentional states are relations to contents via intentional modes, then there are, so to speak, two dimensions of variation in the intentional states of a given subject: variation in content and variation in mode. And if the phenomenal character of a conscious state is supposed to be exhausted by its intentionality, then we can say that it is exhausted by two things: the

²³ For a recent plausible intentionalist treatment of the inverted spectrum, see David R. Hilbert and Mark Eli Kalderon, 'Color and the inverted spectrum' in S. Davis (ed.) *Color Perception: Philosophical, Psychological, Artistic and Computational Perspectives* Vancouver Studies in Cognitive Science Volume 9 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000).

nature of the content and the nature of the mode. So this kind of intentionalism will reject the transparency thesis as just stated: that introspection of the experience only reveals awareness of the objects of the experience and their properties. This is false because introspection can also reveal the mode in which one is relating to the content.

This is most easily illustrated by the case of cross-modal perception. Suppose one holds a wooden cube in one's hand, and one also sees the cube in one's hand. One is having an experience of a cube in one's hand, and experiencing it through sight and touch. Now suppose one could isolate the tactile experience of the cube from the visual experience of the cube, by shutting one's eyes; and suppose one could isolate the visual experience from the tactile experience by (say) anaesthetizing one's hands. What would the difference be between these two isolated experiences? One might try and say that there is a difference in content, but it is hard to express exactly what this difference is. The content, on the face of it, is that there is a cube in one's hand, in both cases. The difference is that in one case one is seeing that there is a cube in one's hand, and in the other one is feeling by touch that there is a cube in one's hand. This is a difference in mode. The difference between seeing something and hearing that same thing – to use an example of Block's, hearing an aeroplane overhead, and seeing an aeroplane overhead – is a difference in the way one is related to the content in question. These kinds of difference in intentional mode (between sight and touch, hearing and smell, or between doubting and fearing) are phenomenal differences. Yet they do not go beyond the resources of intentionality; for a mode is just the way in which one is related to an intentional content. This is why I reject the transparency of experience, and this is why I think that intentionalism can account for the objections which deny that all differences in phenomenal character are differences in intentional content.

I now need to apply this simple idea to the typical kinds of actual counterexample to intentionalism. These in turn fall into two kinds: one where it seems that there is some object before the mind which is not experienced as being part of the external physical world (after-images are examples of this kind), and one where one's whole experience of the external physical world is affected in some way which does not seem to be part of the content of the experience (blurry vision is an example of this kind).

Paul Boghossian and J. David Velleman take the first kind of case as decisive against intentionalism. They consider an example of an after-image (without illusion) of a red spot obscuring the face of someone who has just taken your photo:

Since you suffer no illusion about the nature of this spot, you do not see it as something actually existing in front of the photographer's face. In what sense, then, do you see it as occupying that location at all? The answer is that you see it as merely appearing in that location: you see it as a spot that appears in front of the photographer's face without actually being there. Now, in order for you to see the spot as appearing somewhere, it must certainly appear there. Yet it must appear there without appearing actually to be there, since you are not under the illusion that the spot actually occupies the space in question. The after-image must therefore be described as *appearing in* a location without *appearing to be in* that location; and this description is not within the capacity of any intentionalist theory. An intentionalist theory will analyse the visual appearance of location as the attribution of location to something, in the intentional content of your visual experience. But the intentional content of your visual experience is that there is nothing at all between you and the photographer.²⁴

Notice first that there is a simple response here for an intentionalist who believes in sense-data (indeed, these were precisely the kinds of cases which sustained the original sense-datum theory). The response is that the spot is something which you are aware of, it is the immediate object of your experience. Now it is clear that Boghossian and Velleman are not criticizing intentionalism in this sense; but neither do I want to defend it. However, it is worth pointing out that the fact that this example is so amenable to a sense-datum treatment makes it hard to see how it can be an example of *qualia* as I introduced them above. For qualia in this sense are supposed to be properties of experience; yet the natural treatment of Boghossian and Velleman's example is to take the spot as an object before the mind.

What they say is that because the spot is no part of how you represent the world to be, it is not part of the representational or intentional content of the experience. This

²⁴ 'Colour as a secondary quality' *Mind* 98, 1989, 81-103; reprinted in Alex Byrne and David Hilbert (eds.) *Readings on Color, Volume I: The Philosophy of Color* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1997). The quotation is from pp.91-92 of this reprint.

presumably is the point of the distinction they draw between something appearing in a location and appearing to *be* in a location. But this distinction, it seems to me, does not help them in their argument against intentionalism. Consider this analogy. The famous Mueller-Lyer illusion presents two lines of equal length, one of which looks longer than the other. Illusions of this form give good reasons for thinking that a perceptual experience is not a belief, nor the formation of belief. For one can see the lines as different lengths without believing them to be different lengths, and yet this does not seem to be a case of contradictory beliefs: one could be conscious of both states yet not be offending against any principle of rationality. What we should say instead is that there is a state of mind – that of perceiving the lines to be different lengths – which is distinct from the state of mind of believing the lines to be the same length.

One way to describe the Mueller-Lyer lines is to say this: they appear different lengths but they do not (given what I know) appear to *be* different lengths. Since I suffer no illusion about the actual facts, I do not *take* the lines to be different lengths, I do not act as if they were and so on. No-one, surely, would take this to be a problem for intentionalism, something which intentionalism has no resources to describe. On the contrary, I have just described the case using only the resources of intentionalism. And I think we should say the same about Boghossian and Velleman's case. We want to draw a distinction between how one takes the world to be in having an experience, and the content of the experience as such. For it is natural to think that how we take the world to be is a matter of *attitude* to the content – whether we are rejecting, doubting, accepting it – and not solely a matter of the content itself. In other words, in my Searlean terminology, it is a matter of the intentional mode. So in Boghossian and Velleman's case, it is part of the content of your experience that there is a red spot between you and the photographer. So it is not true that 'the intentional content of your visual experience is that there is nothing at all between you and the photographer'. What is true is that there is a phenomenological difference between the case as they describe it and a case where you are deluded as to the presence of something between you and the photographer. This, I think, is what they mean when they say that the intentional content of your visual experience is that there is nothing at all between you and the photographer. But as the examples just discussed show, not all phenomenological differences are differences in content. Some are differences in mode. And this example, like the Mueller-Lyer example, is one where the phenomenological difference is best captured in terms of a difference in mode. The content does contain a red spot between you and the photographer. But since you know there is no such thing, then there is a sense in which you do not represent the world to yourself as containing a red spot.

The same approach can be taken to the other kind of example: blurry vision. Here everything one sees looks blurry, say, when a shortsighted person removes their glasses. What should an intentionalist say about this example? Again, the case is easy for the sense-datum theory. It can say that when one's vision is blurry, there is an object which actually is blurred. So reflection on the object of the experience will yield every phenomenal detail about the experience; once again, sense-data can save the transparency of experience for the intentionalist. Standard intentionalists, who reject sense-data, will not be able to say this, of course. They must say that the content of the experience represents the world as being blurred. But I think there is something to the complaint by the friends of qualia that this is not quite the right description of the experience. There can be a phenomenal difference between your blurry vision and actually seeing something which has fuzzy boundaries. This difference is one which the friend of qualia (following Boghossian and Velleman) might call the difference between things seeming blurry and things seeming to be blurry. I think that there is such a phenomenal difference, but I think it can be captured in terms of a difference in mode. The content of the experience is that the boundaries of things are blurred; whether or not this seems to be a way the world *is* depends on whether one takes one's experience at face value; that is, whether one is inclined to believe that things have fuzzy boundaries. When one is removing one's glasses, one is not normally inclined to believe that things have fuzzy boundaries. (After all, one normally has some idea about why one is wearing glasses.)

But it seems plainly possible that one might be seeing things in a blurry way and think that they are that way. In this case, there would not be the phenomenal difference which I am saying the friend of qualia is appealing to. So I think an intentionalist should say the following things about the case of blurry vision: first, that the content of the experience is that things have blurry or fuzzy boundaries; but second, one need not represent the world to oneself as such, since one need not be inclined to believe on the basis of this experience that things are fuzzy. The case of illusions like the Mueller-Lyer illusion shows that we need a distinction between how things are in experience and how one takes the world to be, and that this distinction can be a phenomenal one (that is, one that is open to introspection). This

distinction I express by saying that there is a difference in mode; less theoretically, we can express the distinction by saying that things *look* blurry, but since I know how things really are, they do not look *to be* blurry.

I therefore deny the transparency of experience, the view that all differences in phenomenal character of a state of mind are differences in content or object. Some phenomenal differences, like the difference between seeing something and touching it, are differences in the relation in which one stands to the content, and these relations I call the intentional modes. But in denying the transparency of experience, I do not deny intentionalism, since I take intentionalism about experience to be the view that the phenomenal character of an experience is exhausted by its intentionality. And the intentionality of an experience is fixed by two things: mode and content. In the final section of this paper, I will briefly consider whether this position is really a strong intentionalist one.

5. Intentional modes and qualia

In section 4, I tried to make sense of the examples brought against intentionalism, without conceding to weak intentionalism that in experience we are aware of qualia, intrinsic non-intentional properties of experience. (I have discussed the independent reasons for avoiding weak intentionalism elsewhere.²⁵)

However, it might seem that my position simply introduces qualia by another route. For if I deny that the difference between two conscious states is a difference in their content, a difference in the relational properties of the state, then how can I deny that it is a difference in the intrinsic phenomenal properties? And isn't saying that two states differ in their intrinsic phenomenal properties just another way of saying that they differ in qualia? If this is so, then my position just looks like a terminological variant of the weak intentionalist position that the phenomenal character of an experience is determined by its content and by its intrinsic qualia: 'mode' is just my way of saying 'qualia'. Now this is not an objection to the truth of the position, only to its attempt to present itself as a form of strong intentionalism. So if this objection were right, then I would be admitting that strong intentionalism fails, and admitting that (something like) qualia would be needed in giving an account of the phenomenology of experience.

It is true that I am not trying to eliminate or reduce the qualitative character of experience; I am trying to do justice to the phenomena which persuade some philosophers to talk in terms of qualia. The question is, how should we understand this qualitative character, and is understanding it partly in terms of *mode* equivalent to understanding it in terms of qualia? The kind of strong intentionalism I am defending says that phenomenal character is fixed by content plus mode. Now there is a *prima facie* metaphysical difference between modes and qualia. For strictly speaking, modes are not intrinsic features of experience: they are relations. Qualia, as conceived by weak intentionalists, are 'higher-order' properties: properties of properties. If they were properties of individuals, then there could be a mental state which is purely an instantiation of a quale. But this would be a purely qualitative mental state, which is denied by weak intentionalism. Weak intentionalism is the view that all mental states are intentional, but some have qualia. So a weak intentionalist must hold that qualia are properties of properties (i.e. properties of states). Intentional modes, by contrast, are not properties of properties; they are relations in which subjects stand to the contents of their intentional states. So there seems to be, at least, a metaphysical difference, a difference in ontological category, between mode and quale.

But maybe this is not the important difference. For my opponent might say that if there is a translation of everything I say about modes into what they say about qualia, or a mapping of mode-talk onto qualia-talk, then this metaphysical difference (important as it might be for some purposes) can be sidestepped. The heart of the objection is that since everything which the weak intentionalist describes in terms of qualia I describe in terms of mode, and vice versa, these are just alternative ways of speaking, and there is nothing interesting which distinguishes my position from that of a weak intentionalist.

Putting the objection in these terms shows how I need to respond. For I will deny that everything which the weak intentionalist expresses in terms of qualia I will express in terms of mode. I deny this because there are cases where the weak intentionalist describes the phenomenology in terms of qualia where I would not describe it in terms of mode; and there are cases where I would describe the phenomenology in terms of mode, but the weak intentionalist would not describe it in terms of qualia. There is no one-one correlation between qualia and modes, then, so the claim that my theory and my opponent's are notational variants is false.

²⁵ In 'The intentional structure of consciousness' sections 4 and 5.

To take the first kind of case: here the weak intentionalist says that a certain phenomenon is characterized in terms of qualia, but I deny that it is characterized in terms of mode. Colour is an example. Weak intentionalists typically say that there are colour qualia; that in addition to the representational content of the experience of colour, the experience also has intrinsic colour qualia. This is what the inverted spectrum thought experiment is meant to show. But I deny that the phenomenal differences between different colours are differences in mode – as if there were a different mode for seeing green, seeing red and so on! Phenomenal differences between colours are differences in content, differences in how things are presented in experience.

To turn to the second kind of case: here I say that there is a difference in phenomenology which is explained in terms of a difference in mode, which the weak intentionalist would not explain in terms of qualia. The sort of thing I have in mind here is when there is a phenomenal difference between two conscious thought-episodes. Thoughts, considered as episodes in consciousness, can differ in their phenomenal character. There can be a phenomenal difference between wishing that something were the case, and judging that it is. (Some may find this controversial; I cannot defend it here, but I can only draw attention to the fact that my treatment of the Mueller-Lyer illusion in section 4 above relied on the difference between perception and belief being phenomenally available; that is, available to introspection.) This difference is a difference in mode; but it is not something which the weak intentionalist would call a difference in qualia. Differences in qualia, according to the weak intentionalist, are intended to explain differences in sensory (or 'qualitative') states of mind. And not all phenomenal differences which I explain as differences in mode are sensory differences.

I conclude then that explaining phenomenal character in terms of mode and content is not equivalent to explaining phenomenal character in terms of qualia and content. My version of strong intentionalism is not weak intentionalism in disguise. It is therefore possible to be a strong intentionalist and to give a purely intentional account of the phenomena which are supposed to sustain talk of qualia. I have argued here that the best way to do this involves rejecting the transparency of experience. But rejecting this thesis does not depart in any substantial way from the spirit of intentionalism; indeed, the rejection is a natural consequence of a proper understanding of the relational structure of intentionality.

University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT