

# Phenomenal Intentionality Rejected

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## Introduction

The phenomenal intentionality thesis is that there is a type of mental content that is “determined and constituted wholly by” (Horgan and Tienson 2002, p.524) the phenomenal characters. This thesis draws much attention because it rebels against “separatism” —the “divide and conquer” view towards the content and the phenomenal character,<sup>1</sup> and it rivals intentionalism—the thesis that intentional content determines phenomenology<sup>2</sup>.

The most well-known defenders of phenomenal intentionality include Horgan and Tiensen (2002), and Horgan, Tienson, and Graham (2004). The idea of phenomenal intentionality can be traced back to Loar (1987). The argument based on the BIV scenario is one of the most influential arguments for the phenomenal intentionality thesis.

There are doubts towards the soundness of the BIV argument, e. g. Wilson (2003), Bailey and Richards (2014). Such criticism has raised suspicions towards the existence of phenomenal intentionality. Recently, a more direct objection is given by Werner (2015), who offers a conceivable scenario where two subjects sharing phenomenology differ in the contents of their beliefs. I am sympathetic with Werner’s conclusion as well as his methodology. Nonetheless, his target is lim-

ited to the intentionality of occurrent beliefs. Therefore, his conclusion is consistent with that perception has phenomenal intentionality. In this paper I will target the content of perception, especially the visual experience,<sup>3</sup> and argue that perceptual content is not determined solely by the phenomenal characters. My strategy is to present possible scenarios where two visual experiences have the same phenomenal character yet they differ in narrow content. My argument is not only a complement, but also a stronger objection to the phenomenal intentionality thesis. This is because perception seems more promising to have phenomenal intentionality than cognition.<sup>4</sup> This is reflected in that the main arguments for the phenomenal intentionality thesis start with visual experiences.<sup>5</sup> Also, the existence of phenomenal intentionality in cognitive states involves a further debate on a type of non-sensory phenomenology—“cognitive phenomenology,”<sup>6</sup> and Lycan (2008) even ties the former to the possibility of the latter. But it is controversial whether there is cognitive phenomenology at all. Anyway, my argument on perception can bypass this complexity. Another contribution of my discussion is on the individuation of the phenomenal intentional contents. To evaluate the plausibility of the phenomenal intentionality thesis, we have to know the criterion of being the same phenomenal intentional content, but the proponents have offered few explicit and operational characterizations. Everyone agrees that any phenomenal intentional content must be narrow. However, narrow contents are notoriously elusive.<sup>7</sup> I propose to take the supposed phenomenal intentional contents as Fregean contents, and the latter are in turn given a criterion of identity following Chalmers’ 2d semantics (Chalmers 2002, 2004a).

A synopsis: I begin with arguing that if the phenomenal intentionality exists at all, then it must be Fregean, instead of Russellian. Then I give a criterion of identity for the Fregeanist phenomenal intentional contents following Chalmers’ s epistemic 2d semantics (sect 1). I argue that it is possible that two visual experiences with the same phenomenal character differ in Fregean content, and therefore, visual experiences do not have phenomenal intentionality (sect 2). I reply to possible objections in section 3. I conclude with doubts about the methodology of the BIV argument for the phenomenal intentionality thesis (sect 4).

## 1. Fregeanist Phenomenal Intentionality

The question I will focus on is whether visual experiences have contents that are determined and constituted wholly by the phenomenal characters. But the first issue is what sort of thing the supposed phenomenal intentional contents could be. There are two opposed views concerning content, Russellianism and Fregeanism.<sup>8</sup> Russellian contents are structured objects constituted of worldly items such as objects and properties, while Fregean contents are structured objects constituted of ways of thinking about, or modes of presentation of, objects and properties.

I argue that if the phenomenal intentional contents exist, they must be Fregean, instead of Russellian. This is because the proponents of phenomenal intentionality take such contents as narrow: “Phenomenology does not depend constitutively on factors outside the brain” (Horgan and Tienson 2002, p.526).<sup>9</sup> It follows that Russellian contents cannot be phenomenal intentional contents for the simple reason that they are wide, built up from worldly items. By contrast, Fregean contents are taken to be narrow, or at least are promising candidates. Therefore, I formulate the idea that visual perception has phenomenal intentionality as follows:

(FPI) Fregeanistic Phenomenal Intentionality: The Fregean content of any visual experience  $e$  is determined and constituted by the phenomenal character of  $e$ .

The thesis that I am going to argue against is

(Supervenience) Necessarily, for any visual experiences  $e_1$  and  $e_2$ , if  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  have the same phenomenal character, then the Fregean content of  $e_1$  is the same with that of  $e_2$ .

(FPI) entails (Supervenience). (FPI) says that, with respect to visual experience, phenomenal character determines and constitutes the Fregean content. This entails that any two possible visual experiences with identical phenomenal characters must have the same Fregean content. It follows that if (Supervenience) is false, then (FPI) is false. Then by arguing against (Supervenience), I tend to rebut the

most natural formulation of the thesis that visual experiences have phenomenal intentionality. Note that the converse—that (Supervenience) entails (FPI)—is not clearly true. The complexity arises from the “constitution” requirement. What Horgan and Tienson have in mind seems to be that phenomenology “grounds”, and is metaphysically prior to, intentionality. But such an asymmetric relation is not captured by supervenience alone. However, this complexity does not matter for my purpose here.

Following Chalmers’ approach of epistemic 2d semantics,<sup>10</sup> Fregean contents of concepts and thoughts are characterized as epistemic intensions, which are functions from centered worlds to extensions, where a centered world is “a world marked with an individual and a time at its ‘center’ ” (Chalmers 2002, p.611).<sup>11</sup> This line of thought can be generalized to perceptions. Visual experiences represent objects and properties—worldly items. A visual experience has a Russellian content that is composed of the worldly items represented by this experience, just like that a linguistic term has an extension. Meanwhile, a visual experience has a Fregean content consisting of modes of presentations of these worldly items, just like a linguistic term has an epistemic intension. For example, when I look at a red ball in a normal situation, my visual experience represents a certain chromatic property and a certain sphere object; more specifically, it attributes a worldly chromatic property to this ball. Meanwhile, there is a condition that such a chromatic property must satisfy in order to be the property that is represented by my experience—this is the Fregean content.

Let us say that my experience of seeing a red ball has the phenomenal color red\*, which is an aspect of the overall phenomenal character of this experience. The method to find out the Fregean content of red\* is by *armchair reasoning*: considering different status the actual world might turn out to be and then judging what chromatic property will then be represented by this experience. Then the Fregean content of my visual experience is associated with the phenomenal character. Here is why. For a property to be the one that is represented by red\*, it must be the chromatic property that has usually caused red\* experiences “in normal conditions in the past” (Chalmers 2004b, p.173). This is because when I consider what my experience represents under different hypotheses of the actual world, I always resort

to what would be the usual cause of the red\* experience. For instance, when I know the chromatic property that has the proper causal relation with red\* here is the wavelength of spectral reflectance with the value, say, 650nm, I would say that having wavelength 650nm is represented by red\*. And when I consider the hypothetical scenario as actual where the instantiation of wavelength of spectral reflectance with the value 470nm usually causes red\*, I would say that having wavelength 470nm will be represented by my red\* experience. And the overall Fregean content of the experience maps different possibilities considered as actual to veridicality.<sup>12</sup>

To wrap it up, suppose that subject  $S_1$  has experience  $e_1$  and  $S_2$  has  $e_2$ , then we can define:

(Fregean content) The Fregean content of  $e_1$  is the same with that of  $e_2$ , iff,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  would agree (when they have sufficient abilities) on what  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  will represent in any possible world considered as actual.[Fregean content]

To be more specific,  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  have the same Fregean content iff for any possible world  $w$ , if  $w$  is taken as actual by  $S_1$  and also taken as actual by  $S_2$ , then  $S_1$  judges that  $e_1$  represents property  $P$  iff  $S_2$  judges that  $e_2$  represents property  $P$ , or,  $S_1$  judges  $e_1$  to be veridical iff  $S_2$  judges  $e_2$  to be veridical.

Some notes are in order. First, the modality involved is metaphysical, since this seems the one used by the proponents of phenomenal intentionality to formulate their theses. For example, Horgan and Tienson says that phenomenal intentionality “is *not merely nomically* determined; rather, intentional mental states have such intentional content by virtue of their phenomenology.” (2002, p.520, italics mine) It seems only natural to understand this claim as that the phenomenal intentional content is metaphysically determined by the phenomenal character.

Second, I take granted that Fregean contents exist. General doubts towards the very existence of Fregean content can be bypassed here because if there is no Fregean content at all, then any content that a perception can have is composed of worldly items, and then there cannot be any phenomenal intentional content, which

entails what I am trying to show.<sup>13</sup>

Third, there might be creatures that do not have cognitive abilities to consider or express opinions about possible scenarios, but they might have experiences that share the Fregean contents of ours. This is what the “when they have sufficient abilities” note for. (Fregean content) merely says that the *capable* subjects would agree on verdicts of extensions in various scenarios. It doesn’t hurt my purpose that there can be incapable creatures with no cognitive thoughts yet have experiences that share the Fregean contents with ours, as I will only consider subjects with cognitive abilities equal to ours. It is sufficient to rebut (Supervenience) that some capable subjects disagree with our judgments on the extensions of visual experiences.<sup>14</sup>

Forth, it might be tricky to decide the identity of phenomenal characters when  $S_1 \neq S_2$ . According to the standard view of the phenomenal character, two experiences have the same phenomenal character iff what it is like to have one experience is just what it is like to have the other. When the two experiences are had by a single subject, they have the same phenomenal character iff they are *indiscernible* to this subject, that is, the subject cannot tell any difference between the two experiences with respect to the what-it-is-likeness, or, if she had the two experiences consecutively, she wouldn’t feel any change. However, when the two experiences are of two different subjects, they cannot be felt and compared by a single subject. And yet we have to make sense of such interpersonal comparisons since (Supervenience) qualifies all the experiences. Perhaps we can bypass the issue by taking “the common sense view”<sup>15</sup>: we have an idea of what a visual experience is like for a subject clear enough to understand what it would take for another experience of another subject to have the same phenomenal character—it would have to feel like a particular way. Anyway, the proponents of phenomenal intentionality have to admit that it is meaningful to compare phenomenal characters of experiences interpersonally, as Horgan and Tienson invite us to imagine creatures from other possible worlds that *share our* phenomenal consciousness (2002, p. 524). We can safely assume for the sake of argument that  $e_1$  and  $e_2$  have the same phenomenal character iff they have the same what-it-is-like-ness, no matter whether  $e_1$  and  $e_2$

are of a single subject or of two distinct subjects.

## 2. Against (Supervenience)

To argue against (Supervenience), I am going to show that it is possible that a creature has a visual experience that is phenomenally the same with my current experience of seeing a red ball, but the Fregean content of her experience is not the same with that of mine, that is, her red\* experience does not attributes to the ball the chromatic property that usually causes red\*.

Imagine a type of creatures with phenomenal consciousness as rich as us except that the phenomenal colors of their experiences randomly change—call them RC-creatures. Nonetheless, they live on a twin-earth such that we wouldn't notice any differences from our earth had we traveled there. This means that there is no co-variance between any phenomenal color of their experiences and any worldly property. They might experience phenomenal colors repeatedly. But there is absolutely no pattern of the repeated occurrences of phenomenal colors. The difference between us and RC-creatures can be shown in the following way. If I look at a red ball in the same normal situation at different times  $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ , and  $t_3$ , my experiences  $e_1$ ,  $e_2$ , and  $e_3$  have the same phenomenal color red\*. But if an RC-creature looks at a red ball in the same environment at time  $t_4$ ,  $t_5$ , and  $t_6$ , her experiences  $e_4$ ,  $e_5$  and  $e_6$  may or may not have the same phenomenal color. There is no way to predict what phenomenal color her experience will have from any properties in her environment—the phenomenal colors of RC-creatures' experiences are fundamentally random.<sup>16</sup>

I argue that RC-creatures render (Supervenience) false. By hypothesis, an RC-creature may happen to have an experience that is phenomenally the same with my red\* experience of seeing a red ball. However, her red\* experience does not have the same Fregean content with mine, as an RC-creature will disagree with me on what property red\* experience represents when we both consider the same possible world as actual. To illustrate, the Fregean content of red\* of my visual experience, as mentioned earlier, can be roughly characterized as

(FC of my red\*) whatever surface property of the object that has a proper causal link with red\*.

This is the result of my armchair reasoning about what red\* will represent in any possible world taken as actual. Armchair reasoning reflects my understanding of red\*, and the understanding is that red\* is caused by a surface property of the object that is external to me.

Why I understand my red\* experience in this way? This is a complex issue. The reason might have something to do with the conceptual connection between the phenomenal colors and the surface properties of the external objects. Although I have no conclusive argument for such a conceptual connection, there is a strong motivation for accepting it: the “transparency” of our experiences, that is, when we introspect the phenomenal colors of our experiences, we only end up with attending to the properties of the external objects.<sup>17</sup> One lesson is that when we say that our experience is red\*, we are saying that it looks to us that there is a red thing—red is a certain surface property of the object that is publicly accessible. In this way, our concepts of the phenomenal colors (e.g. red\*) and those of the surface properties (e.g. red as belonging to the worldly object) have connections that are a priori. To see this connection does not require us to find out what objective property red is in our actual world, but only requires us to know how we use concepts of phenomenal colors and those of objective colors—we resort to objective colors to describe our experiences. Given such a conceptual connection, it is expected that when I consider what my red\* experience represents if the actual word turns out to be such and such, I always try to find the corresponding objective property that causes it—“red”, be it a certain wavelength value or other surface properties.<sup>18</sup>

Now consider the RC-creatures. It is unlikely that their concepts of phenomenal colors have apriori connections with their concepts of any objective properties of the surface. The reason is simply that the RC-creatures would not take the phenomenal colors as indicating anything about the environment. This is because while the phenomenal colors randomly change, any surface property of RC-creatures’ environment (a twin earth) does not randomly change, as the twin-earth

have things with stable surface properties, just like earth. Suppose for reductio that the RC-creatures describe their phenomenal colors resorting to certain publicly accessible properties of the surface, I argue that they would end up holding contradictory beliefs based on their experiences. To be more specific, imagine that an RC-creature looks at the same ball in the same environment at  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , and she has visual experiences  $r$  and  $g$  respectively. Suppose further that  $r$  and  $g$  have different phenomenal colors.<sup>19</sup> Any surface property of the ball hasn't changed. If she describes that her experiences by resorting to any of the surface property of the ball, say  $c$ , then she couldn't express the differences between the phenomenal colors of  $r$  and  $g$ . She has to say that  $r$  and  $g$  have the same phenomenal color, say,  $c^*$ . But meanwhile she must have noticed the difference between  $r$  and  $g$ , and she would have a belief that her experiences at  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  do not have the same phenomenal colors—it cannot be the case that both  $r$  and  $g$  are  $c^*$ . However, this conflicts with the very basic epistemic norm, as this RC-creature consciously holds two contradictory beliefs at the same time. The conclusion is that RC-creatures should have two independent sets of concepts, one for the phenomenal colors and one for any surface properties of the external objects.<sup>20</sup>

If this is the case, then an RC-creature is unlikely to share my understanding of color experiences. And given that one's armchair reasoning about the Fregean content of phenomenal colors is guided by one's understanding of color experiences, an RC-creature is unlikely to agree with me on the Fregean content of red\*. For example, when an RC-creature accepts hypothetically as actual that a world where red\* always accompanies with the wavelength of spectral reflectance value 650nm of the surface, she would still not agree with me that red\* represents this surface property. Instead, she would still take red\* as not caused by any surface property.<sup>21</sup> Her a priori understanding of the phenomenal colors as fundamentally random remains the same across possible scenarios.

To wrap it up, an RC-creature would not agree with me on what red\* represents when she considers various scenarios as actual. It follows from (Fregean content) that an RC-creature's red\* experience has a different Fregean content from my red\* experience. Therefore, (Supervenience) is false.

### 3. Objections and Replies

#### 3.1 The BIV Argument?

Objection: the BIV argument supports (Supervenience), and therefore, there must something wrong with the argument from the RC-creatures, or at least there is a gridlock.

My reply is simply that the BIV argument does not supports (Supervenience). To be more specific, Horgan and Tienson (2002), and Horgan, Tienson, and Graham (2004) offer the following argument based on the idea of a BIV scenario. The argument starts with inviting readers to imagine the duplicates of their brains isolated in a matrix-style world. I will take my BIV-twin for example, and let us name her BIV-me. Suppose that I am looking at a red ball, then given that the phenomenal characters are intrinsic, i.e. supervene on the brain properties, BIV-me has an experience phenomenally the same with my current experience. The proponents didn't argue for (Supervenience) as they didn't characterize phenomenal intentional contents explicitly as Fregean contents.<sup>22</sup> But it seems plausible that BIV-me would share my judgments on the extensions of red\* experience in different possible worlds considered as actual, e.g. when BIV-me hypothetically accepts as actual a world where she is embodied and lives on the earth, the rational thing for her to say is that her red\* experience will attributes the wavelength of spectral reflectance value 650nm to the object. The reason is that judgments on Fregean contents, as certain a priori thoughts, plausibly supervene on the brain properties. It follows that my experience and BIV-me's experience share Fregean content.

Granted the above argument, nonetheless, (Supervenience) does not follow. Note that it is necessary for BIV-me to share my judgments on extensions of red\* that she uses and understands concepts involved in her a priori thoughts in the same way as I do. In other words, not only the phenomenal color, but also the cognitive thoughts in the armchair reasoning essentially contribute to the conclusion that BIV-me's experience has the same Fregean content with mine. Then the BIV argument, at best,<sup>23</sup> shows this:

(Con-BIV) Any two experiences that have the same phenomenal character and are of subjects with the same armchair reasoning have the same Fregean content.

However, this is consistent with the negation of (Supervenience). The reason is that, according to (Con-BIV), the supervenience base of Fregean contents include more than the phenomenal characters, but also includes the armchair reasoning. But (Supervenience) requires that the supervenience base of Fregean content includes *only* the phenomenal. Proponents of phenomenal intentionality cannot simply assume that any creatures with the same phenomenology share armchair reasoning as well. This means that to support (Supervenience) based on the BIV argument, the missing link is,

(Phenomenal Armchair) The contents of armchair reasoning are determined by the phenomenal characters.

(Con-BIV) and (Phenomenal Armchair) entail (Supervenience). To fully address (Phenomenal Armchair), we need a thorough discussion of armchair reasoning. What kind of concepts are involved? A thorough discussion is beyond the scope here. Nonetheless, we can safely assume that logical concepts are involved. But (Phenomenal Armchair) already seems implausible, as it is unlikely that the meaning of logical concepts, such as “or,” is determined by any phenomenal character. Suppose otherwise, that is, when phenomenal characters are the same, thoughts involving the same logical concepts cannot differ in content. It follows that if I have an occurrent thought that “A is red or B is green” with my phenomenal consciousness being Q, then for anyone whose phenomenal consciousness is Q must have the thought that “A is red or B is green”. But this is not the case. Now I am staring at the words written on the screen, and the phenomenal character of having the thought “A is red or B is green” is what it is like to looking at these words, and perhaps some auditory imagery of my inner voice saying: “A is red or B is green.” But for another person who looks at the same words and has the same auditory phenomenology, she might not have the same thought with mine. My thought involves the inclusive sense of “or,” but the other person might have the thought

involving the exclusive sense of “or.” Or she might not distinguish the two senses. The difference in logical concepts need not accompany any phenomenal difference.<sup>24</sup> In sum, (Phenomenal Armchair) is suspicious. But without (Phenomenal Armchair), the BIV argument falls short of supporting (Supervenience).

### 3.2 Complications with “phenomenal duplicate”

It might be objected that (Supervenience) is stronger than Horgan and Tienson’s formulation of the phenomenal intentionality thesis. Their original argument uses the notion of “phenomenal duplicates:” two creatures are phenomenal duplicates “just in case each creature’s total experience, throughout its existence, is phenomenally exactly similar to the other’s.” (2002, p.524) Their aim is that any of your *phenomenal duplicate*, even a BIV, shares “a pervasive kind of” your intentional states with respect to the phenomenal intentional content. Focusing on the visual experiences, I reformulate Horgan and Tienson’s idea as:

Necessarily, for any actual human being  $S_1$  and her phenomenal duplicate  $S_2$ ,  $S_1$ ’s visual experience with phenomenal character  $Q$  and  $S_2$ ’s visual experience with phenomenal character  $Q$  have the same Fregean content.

So there is a distinction between

(Local Supervenience) If the phenomenal character of a single visual experience  $e$  is fixed, then the Fregean content of  $e$  cannot vary; and

(Global Supervenience) If the whole phenomenal consciousness of a subject is fixed, then the Fregean content of any visual experience  $e$  of the subject cannot vary.

My formulation— (Supervenience) —equals to (Local Supervenience), but Horgan and Tienson argues for (Global Supervenience). (Global Supervenience) does not entail (Local Supervenience), so the negation of the latter does not entail the negation of the former.

Granted that (Global Supervenience) and *not*-(Local Supervenience)<sup>25</sup> is a

plausible position for the proponents of phenomenal intentionality to hold,<sup>26</sup> I have to argue against (Global Supervenience). But it appears that RC-creatures can be phenomenal duplicates of actual human beings, and then we could have an argument against (Global Supervenience) resorting to RC-creatures as follows:

(1) There could be a phenomenal duplicate of me that is an RC-creature (call she Duplicate-me).

(2) My red\* experience  $e_1$  and Duplicate-me's red\* experience  $e_2$  have the same phenomenal character.

(3) The Fregean content of  $e_1$  is different from that of  $e_2$ .

(4) (Global Supervenience) is false.

The argument is valid. (2) follows from (1). Then there are two strategies for the proponents of phenomenal intentionality to block it. One is to argue that (1) is false, that is, an RC-creature cannot be my phenomenal duplicate. The other is that (1) entails the negation of (3). I will consider them in turn. First strategy: an RC-creature as I described above cannot be a phenomenal duplicate of an actual human being.

Reply: Given the randomness of phenomenal colors of the experiences of RC-creatures, it could be the case that one of the RC-creature happens to have experiences with phenomenal colors in exactly the same order as I do. Then at least my whole *perceptual* phenomenology can happen to be shared by an RC-creature—name her “Perceptual-Duplicate-me.” Then what phenomenal differences are there between my phenomenal life and Perceptual-Duplicate-me's? Or, what stops Perceptual-Duplicate-me from being a full fledged phenomenal duplicate of me?

Perhaps the opponents would say that Perceptual-Duplicate-me cannot share all the *cognitive* states with me. I concede that Perceptual-Duplicate-me and I might differ in certain cognitive states. For instance, I have a disposition to believe that there is a red ball based on my current visual experience, but it is likely that Perceptual-Duplicate-me would not tend to believe that the ball is red based on the phenomenal color of her experience. However, a disposition to have a belief is not a conscious state, and if it is not, then there cannot be any phenomenal difference entailed by such differences in dispositions. Another difference might be in occurrent beliefs. I might consciously think that “this is a red thing” and “if it is actually

red, then my experience is accurate” when I have a red\* experience, but these beliefs are not shared by Perceptual-Duplicate-me. I have two relies: a) it is not the case that such beliefs necessarily accompany the red\* experience, and if a human being can have a red\* visual experience without any of the above beliefs, then she and the RC-creature that is her perceptual duplicate will not differ in such occurrent beliefs, and this is sufficient for my purpose; b) the opponents cannot simply say that differences in our occurrent beliefs entail that we are not phenomenal duplicates, as this requires a further, substantial claim that contents of occurrent beliefs are determined by phenomenology.<sup>27</sup> In sum, the dialectical situation here is: (1) is plausible given my descriptions of RC-creatures, and the opponents have the burden of proof to show otherwise.

The second strategy is to argue that (1) entails the negation of (3)—my full-fledged phenomenal duplicate cannot have experiences that differ in Fregean contents from mine. The opponents might argue that the actual visual experiences are never simply red\* or of a single red thing, but are structurally rich, and due to the phenomenal richness of visual experiences, the content of any visual experience is fixed by its phenomenology. This idea seems to be reflected in the following passage:

... in typical cases of experiencing red, the overall phenomenal character of one’s visual experience is... a scene that contains a whole array of apparent enduring objects with various properties and relations—including the property redness instantiated on the surfaces of some of these objects. The total visual experience with this overall phenomenal character is richly intentional, *since it presents a temporally extended scene* comprising various objects that instantiate various properties and relations at various *spatial locations* relative to one’s center of visual awareness.” (Horgan and Tienson 2002, pp.521 – 522, italics mine)

Their point is that the rich spatial-temporal structure of a visual experience fixes its Fregean content. Let us consider an example to illustrate this point. Instead of looking at a static red ball, I am looking at a red ball rolling from the left

side of my visual field to the right side, and the whole process goes on from time  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ . The phenomenal character of my visual experience through  $t_1$  to  $t_2$  is such that red\* systematically accompany with sphere\*. Then Horgan and Tienson suggest that any creature who has phenomenally the same experience would understand red\* as I do—attributing it to a certain surface property of the ball. My reply: if RC-creatures do not have conceptual connections between red\* and red as I do, then adding spatial-temporal dimension wouldn't change RC-creatures' a priori understanding of red\*, as they would take it as merely coincident that red\* has systematically correlation with sphere\* through  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ .

Horgan and Tienson might further object that for a phenomenal duplicate of an actual human being, such systematic correlation would happen so many times that it is implausible to take them all as merely coincident. The reason seems to be that Duplicate-me would do inductive reasoning on the phenomenal colors of her visual experiences, and as a result, she would understand red\* in the same way as I do, and then she would agree with my judgments on the extensions of red\*. My reply: even if she would eventually share my understanding towards red\* (albeit I highly doubt it), that is, when she has a red\* experience, she has a belief  $B$  that red\* represents a certain surface property of the object of her experience, I argue that the content of  $B$  is not the content of her red\* experience. The reason is that  $B$  is justified by a posteriori evidences, but the fact that my visual experience has such and such a Fregean content is justified a priori—via conceptual link between red\* and red. Duplicate-me's concept of red\* does not have any a priori link with that of the surface property of the object. The proper description is that Duplicate-me believes that red\* is caused by a surface property *despite* that the Fregean content of her red\* experience is not so.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, inductive reasoning takes time, but we could imagine that I could have a very short life such that Duplicate-me couldn't figure out the correlation between red\* and any surface property.

I conclude that Duplicate-me is possible, and Duplicate-me's having structurally rich experiences is consistent with that she fails to share my understanding of phenomenal colors, and then her visual experiences do not share Fregean contents with mine.

#### 4. Concluding Marks

So far, (Global Supervenience) and (Local Supervenience) are both false, and this means that Fregean content is not determined by the phenomenal character. Moreover, the well-known argument based on the BIV scenario fails to support the phenomenal intentionality thesis.

A further issue is why we find the BIV argument intuitively appealing. I suspect that its intuitive appeal comes from a confusion of the Fregean content of *my* red\* experience with that of a *BIV's* red\* experience. The proponents of phenomenal intentionality invite us to determine BIVs' intentionality resorting to *our* armchair reasoning about the extensions of our red\* experience. Here is Horgan and Tienson's explicit claim on their method:

Virtually everything we have been saying is just attentive phenomenological description, just saying what the what-it's-like of experience is like. It is just a matter of introspectively attending to the phenomenal character of *one's own* experience. You and your phenomenal duplicate share a pervasive kind of mental intentionality—viz., phenomenal intentionality. (2002, p.526, italics mine)

But this methodology is fallacious. For sure when we introspect towards our experiences, we are bound to find that any visual experience has both contents and phenomenal characters, and indeed phenomenology and intentionality are not separable by such introspection. However, this is exactly why it would be a mistake to decide a BIV's intentionality by merely attending to our experiences: even if our phenomenal duplicates' intentionality differs from ours, we would still conclude that they share intentionality with us, because our conclusion is based on our actual experiences where phenomenology and intentionality are always together. But what does this have anything to do with other possible creatures' intentionality? "Attentive phenomenological description" only shows how I think about my experience, not how another possible creature thinks about her experience, yet it is the latter that matters for the intentionality of this possible creature's experience.

Another way to illustrate the above point is to take Fregean content as a type of meaning that experiences have, and compare with meanings of linguistic items. When we look at certain marks on the paper, we understand them as meaningful sentences. But if we show the same marks to an alien who doesn't know English, she wouldn't understand them as having the same meaning. Also notice that structural richness of the marks does not matter. If we give *Hamlet* to the alien, she would still fail to understand it as we do. Even if she could notice the patterns and figure out how English works, it still does not entail that the meanings are determined by the shapes of the marks. The upshot is that attending to our reading experience doesn't decide how the alien would understand these marks. I argue that the BIV argument makes a similar mistake. In the case of linguistic meaning, it is rather easy to spot the fallacious methodology in concluding how aliens think about our words by considering how we see the words, because we do have different languages, and some of us do have experiences of reading foreign languages and failing to understand them as native speakers do. In contrast, the analogous fallacy in the BIV argument is harder to resist because we never have had other types of visual experiences, and it is beyond our imagination how phenomenology and intentionality come apart, and as a result we tend to take our visual experience as the only metaphysically possible type, but we shouldn't.

## Notes

- 1 Terms are borrowed from Horgan and Tiensen (2002, p.520).
- 2 The proponents include Dretske (1995), Lycan (1996) and Tye (1995, 2000).
- 3 I restrict my discussion to the visual modality, not only for simplicity's sake, but also because it is relatively easier to determine the contents of visual perceptions, and this is, perhaps, why visual experiences feature prominently in the current literature.
- 4 See this idea in Kriegel (2011, pp.22 - 23) and Mendelovici and Bourget (2014, p.330).
- 5 See Horgan and Tienson (2002) and Loar (2003a) for example.
- 6 A collection of representative works on cognitive phenomenology is Bayne and Mon-

tague (2011).

7 See Brown (2016) for more on narrow content.

8 I bypass other debates on the nature of contents, such as whether they are structured or not. See fn10.

9 One motivation for proposing phenomenal intentionality is to offer a new way of understanding narrow content. See Loar (2003a) for example.

10 I simply use Chalmers' epistemic 2d semantics as a tool for individualizing the Fregean contents, as it is one of the most widely endorsed versions of 2d semantics. Note that there are other ways to give criteria of identity of Fregean sense without resorting to 2d semantics. For instance, Schellenberg (2012) defends for a criterion for the sameness of Fregean sense base on "epistemic equipollence." (p.166) Many orthogonal issues are involved. Nonetheless, Schellenberg's criterion is also epistemic, and might be taken as sharing some core ideas of Chalmers' epistemic 2d semantics.

11 I use possible world semantics as a tool to give Fregean contents a criterion of identity, but I also said above that the contents are structured. This is not a consistency, because neither of my comments is about the metaphysics of contents, but they are merely convenient sayings and methodological commitments. This means that I don't take side on the metaphysical nature of propositions—whether it is structured or unstructured. See more on this debate in Stalnaker (1999b, 2013) and Hanks (2011).

12 Notice though the characterization of the Fregean content is rough. It is to be expected that there are cases where there is no straightforward answer to what is represented by the experience in question, e.g. sometimes it is difficult to say what is the normal condition. However, this will not affect my following argument, as I will focus on the cases where there are relatively clear answers.

13 Although I think that there are good reasons for the existence of Fregean contents. See Chalmers (2004b), Thompson (2009).

14 This does enough justice to the proponents of phenomenal intentionality, as their arguments center the BIVs who share our cognitive abilities. See more in sect 3.1.

15 This expression is borrowed from Stalnaker (1999a/2003, p.220).

16 Randomness here means that there is no correlation between red\* and any chromatic properties of the surface of objects, but not that there is no correlation between red\* and the brain properties. There might be correlations between red\* and certain brain properties of the RC-creatures.

- 17 Representationalists tend to argue from such “transparency” that there are no intrinsic qualities of experiences (Tye 2000, 2014). I think this is a hasty move. But instead of stepping into the metaphysical debate, I only focus on the conceptual connections indicated by the transparency.
- 18 According to Shoemaker (1994), the conceptions of qualia are derived from those of the dispositional properties of the surface. It seems that not only that there are conceptual connections between phenomenal colors and surface properties, but also that the latter are primary. For further discussion, see Loar (2003b).
- 19 I don’t deny that the experiences might have the same phenomenal colors, but it is sufficient for my purpose that there are cases where they do not.
- 20 A doubt: an RC-creature could describe her experience consistently as follows: “There’s this ball that has a stable surface property *c*. Sometimes *c* causes me to have *r*, sometimes *c* causes me to have *g*, and I can’t predict which experience I will have, because it’s a random process. I can’t explain to you the difference between *r* and *g*, but that is just a general problem of qualitative experience (you don’t know what it’s like for me to see red, etc.).” My reply is that this description supports my conclusion that RC-creatures must use two separate sets of concepts, one for the external colors, such as “*c*” here, and one for her experience, such as what phenomenal colors her visual experiences have. Thanks to Vera Hoffmann-Kolss for this point.
- 21 RC-creatures do not have to know what red\* represents. They might well take phenomenal colors as incomprehensible, just like currently we find superposition in Quantum Mechanics incomprehensible.
- 22 Note that Horgan and Tienson claim that “[o]ur distinction between narrow and wide truth conditions has some kinship to the approach of so-called two-dimensional modal semantics.” (2002, p.532n26)
- 23 Wilson (2003) complains that the BIV argument only conceives one possible phenomenal duplicate, but it cannot be generalized that every possible phenomenal duplicate has the same intentionality. However, the proponents of the BIV argument could reply that the BIV scenario is an extreme example of radically changing all the external factors.
- 24 Note that Werner (2015)’s argument against phenomenal intentionality helps my objection to (Phenomenal Armchair). This is because his argument targets on occurrent beliefs, and therefore, the cognitive contents are not determined by the phenomenal characters if his argument works.
- 25 Bourget (2010) argues that it is metaphysically possible that any intentional sensory ex-

perience occurs by itself, without accompanying any other intentional state, and this is also supported by some empirical evidence. (pp.36 – 37) His conclusion might indirectly support (Local Supervenience). Here is how. Suppose it is plausible that an isolated visual experience has the same content with a visual experience, having the same phenomenal character, accompanied with other intentional states, then (Local Supervenience) follows.

- 26 It is doubtful that the core idea of phenomenal intentionality can be captured by (Global Supervenience) without (Local Supervenience). See Werner (2015, pp.267 – 269).
- 27 Again, note that Werner (2015) ’ s arguments against that occurrent beliefs have phenomenal intentionality works would help.
- 28 Duplicate-me ’ s discovery that red\* correlates with a certain surface property would be surprising to her, and it would be a piece of substantial, empirical knowledge.

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