Truth and Content in Sensory Experience

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David Papineau's *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience* is deep, insightful, refreshingly brisk, and very readable. In it, Papineau argues that sensory experiences are intrinsic and non-relational states of subjects; that they do not essentially involve relations to worldly facts, properties, or other items (though they do happen to correlate with worldly items); and that they do not have truth conditions simply in virtue of their conscious (i.e., phenomenal) features.

I am in enthusiastic agreement with the picture as described so far. But Papineau also argues that sensory experiences are in no interesting sense essentially representational and that what is responsible for their truth conditions is their correlations with the environment. Here, I disagree. Indeed, I think Papineau does not follow his arguments to their proper conclusions. For if sensory experiences are intrinsic, non-relational, and only contingently correlated with worldly conditions (as Papineau and I agree they are), then the phenomenal features of sensory states are representational in an important

sense: they constitute what we think, perceptually experience, or otherwise entertain, making up how things seem to us from a first-person perspective. Because of this, the truth conditions of perceptual experiences cannot be entirely independent of their phenomenal features. They cannot merely be a matter of environmental correlations. If we follow Papineau's arguments to their proper conclusions, we end up with a view much closer to a version of representationalism that Papineau dismisses, a view he calls "pure phenomenal intentionalism". Or so I will argue.

I proceed as follows: Section 1 overviews Papineau's picture of sensory experience and his main lines of argument. Section 2 distinguishes between two ways of understanding the notion of mental representation. Section 3 argues that even if sensory experiences are intrinsic, non-relational, and only contingently correlated with worldly conditions, as Papineau claims, there is an important sense in which they are essentially representational. Section 4 argues that the truth or veridicality of sensory experiences is a matter of conforming to these essentially represented contents. Section 5 considers Papineau's picture of introspection of phenomenal properties, which might be thought to preclude the picture of experiential truth suggested in section 4. The upshot is that if sensory experiences are intrinsic, non-relational, and independent of worldly correlations—as, again, Papineau and I agree they are—then reaching the world in an epistemically meaningful way is much more challenging than

Papineau makes it out to be.

1 Book summary

The Metaphysics of Sensory Experiences is about *sensory experiences*, which are phenomenally conscious experiences of the sort involved in perception. Sensory experiences include genuine cases of perception, illusions, and hallucinations. Papineau is not overly concerned with how to distinguish sensation from cognition (p. 11–14),[1] and rightly so since he eventually argues that everything he says about sensory experiences also applies to cognitive experiences, if there are any (p. 128–129). So, although his focus is on *sensory* experiences, we may take his discussion to pertain to conscious experiences more generally. Papineau takes sensory properties to be properties of subjects, though he accepts that there can be alternative ways of setting things up on which it would be correct to say that they are properties of mental or neural particulars (pp. 14–16).

The main theses of the book are that "conscious sensory properties are intrinsic qualitative properties of people" (p. 1) and that "sensory consciousness is one thing and sensory representation another." (p. 152)

Papineau's argument for this view mostly consists in arguments against alternative naive realist, sense-datum, and representationalist views of experience, which take conscious sensory experiences to constitutively involve relations to facts, mental particulars, and properties, respectively. Let us quickly

[1] Unless indicated otherwise, all page references are to Papineau's *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience* (2021).

go over some of these arguments, focusing, with Papineau, on the arguments against representationalism.

Naive realism is the view that sensory experiences at least sometimes (i.e., in cases of genuine perception as opposed to illusion or hallucination) constitutively involve relations to worldly facts (or perhaps to objects and their properties). A consequence of naive realism is that a genuine perceptual experience, on the one hand, and a hallucination or illusion, on the other, cannot involve the very same conscious properties, since the perceptual experience constitutively involves a relation to worldly facts while the hallucination or illusion does not. This, Papineau claims, is unacceptable because it posits conscious differences that go beyond anything subjects can introspectively discern, which "threatens to loosen our hold on the very concept of consciousness itself." (p. 17)

The *sense-datum theory*, like naive realism, maintains that conscious sensory properties are relational but that they are relations to mind-dependent sense-data rather than worldly facts. Unlike naive realists, sense-datum theorists can accept that perceptual experiences, hallucinations, and illusions can involve the same conscious properties. But Papineau rejects the sense-datum view because he takes it to be inconsistent with physicalism since, presumably, sense-data are non-physical entities (p. 29).

Papineau's treatment of naive realism and sense-datum theories is mainly intended to clear the ground before he engages his main opponent, the representationalist. Papineau takes *representationalism* to be the view that conscious sensory properties are identical to representational properties (p. 30).

For example, according to representationalism, what it is to have a sensory experience as of a red square is to mentally represent (perhaps in a certain way) a red square. While Papineau accepts that sensory experiences can "happen contingently to be representations" (p. 31), he rejects the stronger representationalist claim that they are "essentially representational" (p. 32). What he means by this is that although sensory experiences can have representational features, these representational features are not metaphysically connected to their phenomenal features—the two sets of features don't bear any relations of identity, grounding, metaphysical necessitation, constitution, etc. to one another. Papineau likens sensory experiences to marks on a piece of paper, which might happen to represent various propositions but do not represent simply in virtue of being the typographical marks that they are (they might have had the same typographical features but represented differently).

At this point, it is pertinent to ask what Papineau means by "representation". Papineau understands representation as being a matter of having truth conditions, where truth conditions are to be understood broadly so as to include conditions of accuracy, veridicality, and satisfaction:

> Throughout this book I shall understand representational contents in terms of the possession of *truth conditions*. The essential feature of any representational state is that it lays down a condition for the world to satisfy. It portrays the world as being a certain way, by drawing a line in logical space between the possibilities that verify it and those that do not. (p. 36, italics in original, footnote suppressed)

We will return to this understanding of representation in the next section, where I will suggest that there is another notion of representation at play in some debates over representationalism.

Papineau distinguishes between two kinds of representationalist views: naturalist representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism. *Naturalist representationalism* combines the basic representationalist thesis with a naturalistic theory of mental representation. The view aims to offer an account of phenomenal properties in terms of representational properties, which are accounted for in terms of "naturalistic" ingredients like correlations between internal states and worldly items.[2] Papineau himself accepts a teleological correlational account of mental representation on which the relevant correlations are specified in part by the behavioral effects of internal states (pp. 48–49; see also Papineau 1984, 2017). In this book, Papineau does not argue for this correlational view of mental representation but he does take it on board as part of his overall position. While he accepts the naturalist representationalist's general picture of representation, he rejects the additional claim that conscious sensory properties are metaphysically connected to representational properties.

The second version of representationalism that Papineau considers, *phenomenal intentionalism*, aims to offer an account of representational properties in terms of phenomenal properties. According to phenomenal intentionalism, instantiating the right phenomenal properties metaphysically necessitates representing a particular content. For example, a sensory experience as of a red

[2]This kind of naturalist representationalism combining representationalism with a correlational picture of mental representation is sometimes called "tracking representationalism". Dretske (1995) and Tye (2000 are well-known proponents of this view. See Bourget and Mendelovici (2014) for an overview.

square might represent a red square simply in virtue of its phenomenal character. This kind of "phenomenal intentionality" is the most basic or fundamental kind of representation, the kind from which any other kinds ultimately derive.[3] My sympathies lie with phenomenal intentionalism, though I do not entirely agree with Papineau's characterization of the view (see below).

Papineau's characterizations of naturalist representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism gloss over many details. For instance, some (arguably *all*) naturalist representationalists take phenomenal properties to be identical to properties of representing contents *in a particular way* (as Papineau recognizes; p. 33); phenomenal intentionalists do not generally aim to identify *every* sensory property with a representational property; both naturalist representationalism and phenomenal intentionalism are sometimes characterized in terms of supervenience, determination, constitution, metaphysical necessitation, and other relations apart from identity (as Papineau recognizes; p. 38); and some phenomenal intentionalists—and perhaps also some other representationalists—do not understand representation in terms of truth conditions (as Papineau also seems to recognize; p. 75—more on this shortly). For ease of discussion, Papineau skates over many of these nuances. In most cases, this is unproblematic.

Papineau offers an extended discussion of representationalism in which he urges readers to seriously consider the metaphysical consequences of various versions of the view. Naturalist representationalism, for instance, takes our

[3]This view, or something near enough, has been defended by Kriegel (2011), Pitt (2004, 2009), Farkas (2008, 2013), Siewert (2000), Horgan and Tienson (2002), Woodward (2019, 2016), Bourget (2010), and yours truly (2018). For overviews, see Kriegel (2013) and Bourget and Mendelovici (2016).

here-and-now sensory experiences to constitutively involve distant correlations, which, depending on the specifics of one's correlational view of mental representation, may be neither "here" nor "now". This is a consequence Papineau finds hard to take seriously (p. 51). Against representationalists appealing to transparency observations, who maintain that abstract properties like redness and squareness are literally present in sensory experience, Papineau suggests the view is "little better than magic" (p. 63) and, again, that it is "inconsistent with the here-and-now nature of conscious experience." (p. 65)

Papineau's urgings culminate in an argument that he takes to apply to all versions of representationalism:

1. Instantiations of conscious sensory properties constitute concrete facts with causes and effects.

2. Instantiations of representational properties constitute abstract facts that cannot feature as causes or effects.

3. Conscious sensory properties are not representational properties. (p. 72)

The basic idea is that representing a content constitutively involves bearing relations to abstract items, while instantiating a conscious sensory property does not. So, instantiating a conscious sensory property is not representing a content. Although there are potential concerns with seeing how this argument applies to non-identity versions of representationalism, I am largely sympathetic to Papineau's worries. If, along with many of the representationalists Papineau targets, we take representation to be a relation to abstract properties, conditions, propositions, or the like, it is utterly mysterious how

representing a content can be identified with—or, arguably, otherwise interestingly metaphysically related to—having a concrete phenomenal experience.

According to Papineau's alternative view, which he dubs the *qualitative view*, "conscious sensory properties are intrinsic qualitative properties of subjects. It is not essential to sensory experiences that they relate subjects to objects or properties beyond themselves." (83) He likens his view to the adverbialist views of Ducasse (1942) and Chisholm (1957), on which sensory experiences are modifications of subjects rather than relations to mental, physical, or abstract items. (Papineau wisely distances himself, though, from the adverbialists' linguistic project of paraphrasing apparently relational descriptions of sensory experiences into adverbial constructions.)

Papineau does not think that sensory experience is an amorphous blob of mish-mashed qualia. He recognizes that sensory experiences exhibit particular structural and organizational features and even that they can be divided into object-appearing and property-appearing components. He calls these components "quasi-objects" and "quasi-properties". Drawing on Farkas (2013), Papineau argues that quasi-objects and quasi-properties are purely phenomenal constructions that are not constituted by any worldly objects or properties. Papineau also takes care to emphasize that these quasi-objects and quasi-properties do not constitute or somehow specify our sensory experiences' truth conditions. As mentioned earlier, Papineau instead accepts a correlational picture of representation, i.e., of the having of truth conditions. Thanks to how we are embedded in our environments, our sensory properties happen to correlate with certain worldly conditions. Sensory experiences are true just in

case the conditions with which they are correlated in fact obtain.

Put figuratively, we have an internal movie playing in our heads in which we experience quasi-objects as having quasi-properties. This internal movie is constitutively independent of any worldly objects, properties, or facts. But bits of this internal movie are correlated in particular ways with the external world, and in virtue of these correlations they have truth conditions. When the external condition with which a bit of the internal movie is correlated obtains, that bit is true.

I agree with a lot of the picture presented so far. I agree that conscious properties are not relations to worldly objects, facts, properties, or other items. I agree that they are structured and organized in a way that results in something like "quasi-objects" and "quasi-properties". And I agree that conscious properties do not (usually) determine their own truth conditions. But I think there are ways of understanding the notion of representation on which quasi-objects, quasi-properties, and other quasi-items qualify as represented contents: these items are what we think, experience, or entertain. Once we recognize this representation-like feature of quasi-items, it becomes clear that truth is a matter of conforming to these represented contents and not just a matter of correlated worldly conditions obtaining.

2 Two notions of representation

As we saw in the previous section, Papineau uses "representation" to mean the having of truth conditions. But this way of defining "representation" is not

universally accepted. In this section, I want to suggest that there are at least two related representation-like notions at play in the relevant debates: first, the notion of there being something that is thought, believed, perceptually presented, or entertained and, second, the notion of connecting with the world, perhaps by securing or constituting truth conditions. I will later suggest that the having of Papineau's quasi-objects, quasi-properties, and other quasi-items satisfies the former representation-like notion even though it does not secure truth conditions. I will also later suggest that as a result of this truth requires conformity with our quasi-contents, not merely that correlated environmental conditions obtain. If all this is right, then Papineau's picture is incomplete, in that it neglects to describe some representation-like features of sensory experiences, and incorrect, in that it mistakenly takes experiential truth to be a matter of worldly correlations.

Let us first consider the two representation-like features. Contemporary discussions of the mind's ability to represent the world can be largely traced back to a well-known passage from Brentano:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is af-

> firmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (Brentano 1874, p. 88)

Brentano's talk of "intentional (or mental) inexistence" refers to the phenomenon of a mental state having "something as an object within itself". This object need not be constituted of worldly objects, facts, abstract properties, propositions, or truth conditions. Arguably, representation-like notion at play in this passage need not essentially involve truth conditions or relations to anything.

Let us call the phenomenon Brentano's passage points to *intentionality* and the contents it involves *intentional contents*. Intentional contents are the "objects" of mental states—they are that which is thought, that which is entertained, that which is believed, that which is perceptually experienced, etc. Contents in this sense are what we are in some sense aware of or entertain when we think and reason and when it perceptually appears to us that things are a certain way. When we wonder what to have for dinner, believe that 2+2=4, or sensorily experience a fluffy brown and white dog, we are entertaining intentional contents. These are the contents that characterize our first-person perspective on the world, how things seem or appear to us. When we try to imagine what someone is thinking or perceptually representing things as being, we are trying to imagine their contents in this sense, the contents that they are entertaining. When thought bubbles in comic books are used to depict the contents of a character's thoughts and experiences, it is their intentional contents that they are depicting.

Arguably, many of Papineau's representationalist opponents intend to be us-

ing "representation" to mean intentionality, the phenomenon described above. This is most clearly true of phenomenal intentionalists (as Papineau appears to recognize; p. 33),[4] though there is also a case to be made that naturalist representationalists like Dretske (1995) and Fodor (1987) also aim to at least be covering the phenomenon of intentionality.[5]

The notion of truth might be taken to be connected to that of intentionality in the following way: If an intentional state "says" that things are a particular way, then it seems to follow that they might be that way or they might fail to be that way. So, it is natural to think that intentional states have truth conditions just in virtue of having intentional contents. This brings us to the second representation-like notion, that of having truth conditions (and, similarly, conditions of reference—but I will focus on truth conditions in what follows). Papineau uses the term "representation" to pick out the having of truth conditions.

It is a common assumption that intentional contents are or determine truth conditions, that a single thing plays both the role of being what is thought, entertained, etc. and that of constituting or otherwise determining truth conditions. Arguably, many naturalist representationalists and phenomenal intentionalists accept this assumption.[6] But it is a substantive claim that a single thing plays both of these roles. The intentional contents we think and expe-

[4]Most phenomenal intentionalists, as far as I know, do not specifically understand the relevant notion of mental representation in terms of truth conditions but instead rely on something like the intuitive Brentanian characterization, and some are rather explicit in this (see especially Kriegel 2011, ch. 1, and Mendelovici 2018, ch. 1).

[5]See my 2018, pp. 14–16.

[6]Naturalist representationalists making this assumption arguably include Dretske (1995) and Tye (2000). Many phenomenal intentionalists also assume this, such as Pautz (2009), Chalmers (2006), Bourget (2019a, 2019b).

rience might not be identical to or otherwise determining of truth conditions. What we think *in* might not specify conditions for the world to satisfy.

3 Papineau's disagreement with phenomenal intentionalism

At this point, one might worry that Papineau's arguments do not make contact with some of his opponents' views. Although Papineau defines representationalism using the notion of representation as the having of truth conditions, he does consider a view, which he calls *pure phenomenal intentionalism*, that denies that phenomenal properties constitutively involve relations to abstract items or other worldly items. He recognizes that the version of pure phenomenal intentionalism that denies that phenomenal properties determine truth conditions is not susceptible to his main line of argument against representationalism. But he dismisses the view, claiming it effectively collapses into his own view:

> [P]erhaps [the pure phenomenal intentionalist's] best move at this point would be to abandon the idea of a constitutive tie between character and truth conditions. And indeed an increasing number of philosophers who identify themselves as phenomenal intentionalists do just that. They rest their case entirely on the internal structure of sensory consciousness itself, and make no attempt to claim any essential tie to further worldly conditions. Their posi-

> tion is that sensory experience is intrinsically directed, pointing out to a world beyond itself, even if this directedness fails to fix any definite truth conditions without the assistance of the subject's environment. (See Loar (2003), Kriegel (2008: Section 7), and Mendelovici (2018: Part 5) for versions of this position.)
>
> This is a viable position, but the obvious question is what distinguishes it from the kind of purely qualitative view that I am defending. As I said at the end of the last chapter, once it is granted that conscious character fails to fix truth conditions on its own, the claim that it is essentially representational is called into question. After all, my own view also takes conscious sensory character to determine truth conditions once it is given an environmental setting, yet on my view conscious sensory character in itself is representationally dumb. (p. 75)

Papineau is right to say that the pure phenomenal intentionalist who denies that phenomenal states by themselves secure their own truth conditions holds a view quite similar to his own. However, there are two important differences, which he appears to neglect. First, the pure phenomenal intentionalist insists that there is an important sense in which sensory experiences are essentially representational: they are essentially *intentional* (in the sense outlined in the previous section). Second, the pure phenomenal intentionalist need not (and generally does not) take truth conditions to be determined by environmental factors.[7]

[7]Papineau's attribution of this view to me in the above passage is inaccurate. It is true

In the next two sections, I will consider the two points of contention between pure phenomenal intentionalism and Papineau's view. I want to suggest that Papineau's view of sensory experience as intrinsic, non-relational, and structured in terms of quasi-objects and quasi-properties leads us to a view much closer to the pure phenomenal intentionalist view he rejects.

4 Quasi-items as intentional contents

I want to suggest that Papineau's quasi-objects, quasi-properties, and any other related quasi-items (quasi-propositions?) qualify as intentional contents. They are among what we think, perceptually experience, or entertain. I'm not sure if Papineau would agree with this claim—he neither makes such a claim nor denies it, since he does not employ the relevant notion of intentionality. But, in any case, this is a claim worth making because it highlights an important feature of quasi-items: they are intentional contents.

If Papineau takes on board this claim about quasi-items, his overall view bears even more similarity to the pure phenomenal intentionalist view he claims collapses into his own than he acknowledges. We can read him as arguing, against many of his representationalist opponents (but along with the pure phenomenal intentionalist), against the assumption that a single phenomenon plays both the roles of intentional contents and of truth conditions. Our inten-

that some versions of phenomenal intentionalism like those of Horgan and Tienson (2002), Pautz (2021), Bourget (2010), and myself (2018, 2020) aim to accommodate externalist contents—and externalist truth conditions—with a picture of *derived* representation. But these externalist truth conditions are in some way or other indirectly determined by *phenomenally* represented contents. They are not determined by mere correlations with the environment or by the mere fact of being embedded in a particular environment.

tional contents—what we think, experience, or entertain—do not constitute or determine their own truth conditions; there is no fact of the matter stemming from their nature as intentional contents as to how the world must conform to them in order for them to be true. Put figuratively, our internal movie constitutes our first-person perspective on the world. These are the contents we think, experience, and entertain. But there is no fact of the matter as to how this internal movie is *supposed* to correspond to the world arising from the intrinsic features of the movie itself.

If Papineau does not reject the claim that quasi-items qualify as intentional contents, his view is compatible with construals of representationalism alternative to his own that take phenomenal properties to be identical to (or in some way metaphysically determined by or determining of) intentional properties (rather than truth conditions), including pure phenomenal intentionalism. Such a construal of representationalism would take phenomenal properties to be essentially connected to intentional properties but remain neutral on how these properties are related to the having of truth conditions.

So far, I've made the (friendly, I think) suggestion that Papineau's quasi-items qualify as intentional contents, where intentional contents are what is thought, believed, experienced, entertained, etc. While many theorists will identify intentional contents with truth conditions or take them to otherwise determine truth conditions, this is not obligatory, and the resulting overall

view would reject this further claim.

5 Where do truth conditions come from?

Now I want to make a less friendly suggestion: If quasi-items qualify as intentional contents, this casts doubt on Papineau's correlational picture of the truth conditions of sensory experiences.

Let us again consider Papineau's picture of sensory experiences. One of the most agreeable features of Papineau's book, in my opinion, is that it seems to take consciousness seriously. On Papineau's view, consciousness is a real, concrete, here-and-now phenomenon (cf. his argument against representationalism), a phenomenon that cannot lie beyond the realm of introspective discernibility (cf. his arguments against naive realism). The structure of consciousness is real and significant, painting our internal life with quasi-objects and quasi-properties. It constitutes a rich multimodal internal movie, an immersive quasi-world that captures our first-person outlook, that is what we experience and entertain, and that guides our behavior. This quasi-world is not a mere window onto an external world beyond but rather is wholly constituted by a subject's own consciousness. It's a full-blown, purely mental phenomenal world, in something like the Kantian sense, a phenomenal world that is divorced from the noumenal world beyond. All this applies equally to cognitive states, too, insofar as they have phenomenal features. The conscious mind is rich, real, metaphysically substantive, constitutively independent of the external world beyond, a world unto itself.

If this right, then when we ask whether our sensory experiences are true or false, it is clear that what we care about is whether the world conforms in the right way to the quasi-world in our minds—whether the noumenal world corresponds in the right way to the phenomenal world, whether the external world is as our intentional contents "say". When we care about truth, we do not generally care about whether the conditions that our quasi-items correlate with in such-and-such a way now obtain. Of course, this is not to deny that our quasi-world correlates with the external world in various ways. Presumably, there are many such correlations, some of which might play interesting roles in the explanation of why our behavior is sometimes successful.[8] But once we become convinced that consciousness constitutes an all-encompassing quasi-world of quasi-objects and quasi-properties, we can recognize that such correlations do not bear on the question of *truth*. What matters for truth is conformity with our phenomenal world, not with conditions assigned by some environmentally-determined correlation.

That mere correlations are neither metaphysically necessary nor metaphysically sufficient for the having of truth conditions is supported by consideration of cases where intentional contents and worldly correlations come apart in interesting ways. Consider a brain in a vat worried that they are a brain in a vat. The brain would not be comforted to know that most of their sensory experiences are "true" because their internal states are caused so very reliably by states of a computer. Such correlations do not make contact with the brain

[8]Papineau himself holds that the explanatory role of such correlations is limited to explaining why behavior is likely to be successful and not the generation of behavior itself (p. 23).

in a vat's internal picture of the world, their quasi-world of experience. And it is *this* world of phenomenal appearances that the brain hopes conforms to the world beyond. What the brain in a vat wants to know is whether the world beyond their mind conforms to the world as it phenomenally appears to them, as their intentional contents depict, not whether some mind-world correlation generally obtains. Indeed, the brain in the vat might agree that if they were a brain in a vat, the worldly conditions correlated with their phenomenal states generally obtain. But they might still wonder if the world is as their intentional contents depict. What they'd be wondering is whether they veridically represent the world or whether they instead reliably *mis*represent the world. If all this is right, then mere correlations are not metaphysically sufficient for truth conditions.

Mind-world correlations are also not metaphysically necessary for truth conditions. Consider the well-known swamp person who suddenly comes into existence with all the internal states of some person with a normal history. This swamp person has the very same types of phenomenal properties as their historically-normal twin and hence, on Papineau's view, experiences the very same quasi-world as their twin. But this swamp person has no history, so on correlational views that take historical factors to determine the relevant correlations (like Papineau's), their sensory experiences do not have truth conditions. But the fact that no such correlations have been established would not by itself thwart the swamp person's pursuit of truth.[9] What the swamp

[9]We can construct similar examples where there is a breakdown in the relevant type of correlations for other correlational views. For example, for a correlational view taking an internal state's truth conditions to be the worldly conditions it is most reliably caused by, we could imagine a (perhaps momentarily existing) brain that is causally disconnected from

person cares about is whether their internal quasi-world, a world considered purely in terms of its phenomenal features and the quasi-items they constitute or determine, adequately corresponds to the world beyond, not whether some historically-mediated correlation obtains. If this is right, then mere correlations are not metaphysically necessary for truth conditions.

Earlier, I agreed with Papineau that representationalist views that take mental representation (understood as the having of truth conditions) to be a relation to abstracta, propositions, or the like fail as views of phenomenal properties. However, it is noteworthy that they do get one thing right: they take sensory experiences' truth conditions to be determined by their subject's phenomenal features (in most cases). Internal states themselves specify the conditions that must be met for their own truth. So, while I agree with Papineau that such views are inadequate as views of phenomenal properties, they are better placed than Papineau's view to offer a satisfactory account of how the mind makes an epistemically meaningful connection with the world.

And so, given his other views, I think Papineau should reject the correlational theory and accept, along with many representationalists (particularly pure phenomenal intentionalists), that *if* sensory experience makes any meaningful epistemic contact with the world, this must be secured by consciousness. Nothing short of that would do.

This is not to say that we *can* secure meaningful epistemic contact with the world beyond consciousness. Indeed, there are deep problems with the idea that we can secure a connection with the world out of elements that are not

the world or equally connected to too many things such that there is no worldly condition meeting the requirements of the view.

already thus connected, which Papineau recognizes:

> A medium that is not intrinsically representational [i.e., that does not intrinsically have truth conditions] cannot render itself representational by somehow trying to say that it is. Content [i.e., truth conditions] can't be manufactured simply by adding contentless arrows to a set of marks that are not themselves contentful. (p. 108)

You can't get truth conditions out of states that lack truth conditions, no matter what they "quasi-say". That's because quasi-saying (having intentional contents) does not amount to *saying* (having truth conditions). The worry is reminiscent of the basic idea behind Putnam's (1977) model-theoretic argument against internally-determined standards of truth and reference: A theory, understood as a mere uninterpreted set of sentences or strings of symbols, cannot specify its own interpretation, since any attempt to do so from within the theory would merely add further uninterpreted sentences to the theory—it would be "just more theory". The same holds for any items that do not themselves have conditions of truth or reference. Nothing in the internal movie that constitutes our intentional contents can specify how the external world is *supposed* to correspond to the movie since nothing in the internal movie can reach out beyond the movie to specify what the required kind of correspondence is. Everything that goes on in the movie is "just more movie", never reaching the world beyond.

And so, it seems, if a non-relational picture of sensory experience of the sort accepted by Papineau and the pure phenomenal intentionalist is correct, we

are truly stuck in our minds. We have no way of imposing conditions on the world, no way of reaching beyond and making any kind of meaningful epistemic contact with it. This, I think, is the fundamental challenge facing such non-relational views of intentionality, and I don't think it has been adequately appreciated.[10] We are trapped in a phenomenally-constituted quasi-world, wanting to make cognitive contact with the noumenal world beyond, but unable to claw our way out of our phenomenal prison.

For what it's worth, I think that we might be able to specify truth conditions for our sensory experiences from within consciousness itself without running afoul of problems of self-interpretation. We might be able to do this if we have conscious experiences that directly and immediately pick out their referents. The most obvious candidates for such directly referential conscious experiences are conscious experiences of our own conscious states and their intentional contents, the features of such states and contents, and perhaps even some of their relations to one another. For example, perhaps we can directly refer to our own present experiences, their intentional contents, and the relations of similarity and difference that they exemplify (or at least instances of these relations). From these directly referential ingredients, we might be able to specify, from the inside, conditions the world would have to satisfy for our sensory experiences (and perhaps also our other mental states) to be true. Whether we can indeed do so remains to be seen. My point here is that on a picture of sensory experience like Papineau's, truth conditions must be

[10] But see Ott (2016) and Bourget (2019b).

specified from within. Mere correlations won't do.

6 Introspection

I doubt that Papineau would be sympathetic to the above-mentioned approach. For one, it would be in tension with his view of introspection of sensory experience, which does not generally permit the kind of immediate awareness of our own conscious states and intentional contents that would allow us to directly refer to them. In this section, I briefly consider this view of introspection and argue that it is both in tension with Papineau's other views and independently implausible. Someone attracted to Papineau's overall view of sensory experience would do best to avoid taking on board his view of introspection.

Papineau claims that we introspect our sensory experiences indirectly by "noting what beliefs these experiences incline us to form" (p. 122), which we come to know by noting which propositions we are inclined to accept (pp. 122–3). The resulting introspective knowledge of sensory experiences "characterize[s] them in terms of their representational contents, i.e., in terms of their truth conditions" (p. 126) and not by their phenomenal features. For example, suppose you have a sensory experience as of a red triangle. On Papineau's view, you have a sensory experience presenting a red* quasi-property and a triangle* quasi-property as attaching to some quasi-object. To introspect upon this experience, here's what you have to do: You notice that you have a sensory experience that forms the basis of a belief. You also notice that

you are inclined to accept that something is red and triangular (where *redness* and *triangularity* are the worldly properties that correlate with red* and triangular*). From this, you come to know that the belief is true just in case there is something red and triangular, and from this you come to know that your sensory experience has those same truth conditions. This is what it is to introspect upon your red* and triangular* experience.

This view of introspection is indirect in more ways than one: First, your way of depicting your sensory experience to yourself is indirect, via its contingent truth conditions rather than its essential phenomenal features. Second, your way of knowing that you have a sensory experience depicted in this indirect way is by knowing that you have a belief that you take to be caused by it. Third, the way you know that you have the relevant belief is by noting that you are inclined to accept certain represented contents, understood as truth conditions.

This view of introspection of sensory experience is both independently implausible and in tension with Papineau's other views and arguments. It is independently implausible because, on Papineau's view, knowing which proposition we are inclined to accept requires being able to identify the truth conditions of our acceptances, which requires that we know which external conditions they happen (contingently) to be correlated with. So, introspection of our sensory experiences turns out to presuppose substantive worldly knowledge, knowledge with respect to which we are presumably quite fallible. This is an implausible consequence.

Papineau's view of introspection also leads to an odd type of skeptical worry.

Our basis for thinking we have particular sensory experiences includes no evidence for our experiences having particular phenomenal features rather than others. For example, from our evidence, we can (let us grant) infer that we have whatever phenomenal property corresponds to our having truth conditions involving, say, the worldly property of redness, but this evidence does not bear on the question of whether that phenomenal property is red* or green*—or even whether there is such a corresponding phenomenal property at all. Two subjects spectrum-inverted relative to one another but embedded in the same environment would introspect alike and have no rational basis for thinking they have one set of phenomenal features rather than another.

This indirect picture of introspection is in tension with Papineau's other views and arguments. In his argument against naive realism, Papineau urged us to reject the view because it accepts conscious differences that are not introspectively accessible. This argument seems to presuppose that we have some kind of direct, privileged, and authoritative access to our conscious experience. But on Papineau's indirect picture of the introspection of sensory experience, it's unclear why we should be bothered by this consequence of naive realism. Indeed, as was illustrated by the case of spectrum inversion, Papineau's picture of introspection allows for phenomenal differences we cannot in principle discern. To take another example, physical changes in the brain could result in changes in our sensory features without corresponding changes in the environmental conditions with which they correlate, yielding phenomenal changes that we cannot discern. So, it seems that Papineau is himself committed to phenomenal differences that are not introspectively accessible.

More generally, throughout the book, Papineau urges us to take the structure and phenomenology of sensory experience seriously. Sensory experience is a concrete, here-and-now phenomenon, one that can't be explained in terms of insufficiently substantive relations to abstracta and the like. One reason we could have for thinking that sensory experiences are concrete and here-and-now phenomena is phenomenological: something merely abstract cannot account for the very real, substantive, and here-and-now phenomenology of sensory experience. Another reason is that phenomenal features are causally efficacious (something Papineau accepts). But both reasons are undercut by Papineau's picture of introspection. If our only access to sensory experience is indirect via knowledge of how distinct internal states are correlated with the environment, we have no strong phenomenological reasons for thinking we have phenomenal features at all. Any reasons stemming from the causes of behavior for thinking we have such concrete phenomenal features would need to be a reason for thinking that non-phenomenal features of the mind aren't likely candidates for playing the requisite causal roles—a tall order, indeed!

In short, Papineau's indirect theory of introspection undercuts whatever confidence we would otherwise have in Papineau's overall picture. The good news is that this picture of introspection can be excised from Papineau's overall view without any downstream consequences. Indeed, it occurs towards the end of the book, giving the reader the feeling that it simply serves to tie up some loose ends rather than forming a core part of the view, and Papineau himself ends his discussion by admitting that it might not account for introspection of sensory experiences that are not even contingently represen-

tational, allowing for alternative and more direct ways of introspecting upon at least some of our sensory experiences (pp. 135–6). I would recommend that someone attracted to Papineau's overall position reject the claim that most of the relevant introspective episodes are indirect in the way Papineau suggests and instead adopt a view on which we often do have direct and immediate access to the phenomenal features of our sensory experiences. This is independently more plausible and makes for a better fit with many other aspects of Papineau's overall position, and it gives us a glimmer of hope for specifying our truth conditions from within our quasi-world.

7 Conclusion

My overall reaction to *The Metaphysics of Sensory Experience* is that it is largely correct but that it does not go far enough in the direction in which it sets off. The book takes consciousness seriously; exposes the problematic commitments of many versions of representationalism, which have been largely neglected in the rush to naturalize the mind; and correctly recognizes, against the philosophical mainstream, the distinctness of phenomenal consciousness and truth conditions. But, I have argued, if sensory experiences are more or less as Papineau says they are, then we should also say, along with the pure phenomenal intentionalist, they are essentially intentional and that their truth conditions are determined from within consciousness itself (if they are determined at all). If sensory experience is an intrinsic, non-relational feature of subjects, then what we are directly aware of is our own phenomenal world

of intentional contents and reaching the external world beyond is much harder than Papineau makes it out to be.

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