

# Phenomenal Dispositions\*

Henry Ian Schiller

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**Abstract** In this paper, I argue against a dispositional account of the intentionality of belief states that has been endorsed by proponents of phenomenal intentionality. Specifically, I argue that the best characterization of a dispositional account of intentionality is one that takes beliefs to be dispositions to undergo occurrent judgments. I argue that there are cases where an agent believes that  $p$ , but fails to have a disposition to judge that  $p$ .

## 1 Introduction

The thesis of phenomenal intentionality states that the intentionality of an occurrent mental episode (what that thought is about) is determined by the phenomenal character of that occurrent mental episode. Proponents of phenomenal intentionality tend to accept an even stronger thesis than the claim that phenomenal intentionality exists. They also tend to accept the thesis that phenomenal intentionality is the most basic form of intentionality.

Endorsing the basicness of phenomenal intentionality presents the proponent of phenomenal intentionality with a difficulty. They have to explain how persistent mental states like belief can have intentional content without having any phenomenal character. A popular strategy for explaining the intentionality of persistent mental states is to claim that they are dispositions to undergo a mental episode that has phenomenal character. To have a belief with a content  $p$  is to be disposed to undergo an occurrent mental episode with a phenomenal character  $Q$  that determines  $p$ . This

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strategy is endorsed by Bourget (2010, 2017), Kriegel (2011), and Searle (1983, 1990, 1991).

In this paper I argue against the thesis that persistent mental states are dispositions to undergo occurrent mental episodes with phenomenal character. I argue that such a disposition can neither be a necessary nor sufficient condition on having a belief with a particular content. I do so by giving a case in which an individual believes that  $p$ , but a dispositional account will predict that she believes the negation of  $p$ .

This paper will proceed as follows. In §2 I will give a slightly more thorough account of the phenomenal intentionality research program. In §3 I will give a more elaborate characterization of the dispositional account; much of my characterization comes from recent work by Scott Soames (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016) on dispositional accounts of belief states. In §4 I will argue against the dispositional account, by way of providing a putative counterexample. In §5 I will discuss some potential responses to my counterexample.

## 2 The Phenomenal Intentionality Research Program

I will spell out in slightly greater detail the commitments made by proponents of phenomenal intentionality. The thesis of phenomenal intentionality is just the thesis that the intentionality of certain occurrent mental episodes is constituted by the *phenomenal character* of those occurrent mental episodes. If we accept a simple definition of phenomenal character as being what it is like to undergo a particular experience, then the central claim of the phenomenal intentionality thesis is that the intentionality of certain occurrent mental episodes is fixed by what it is like for the thinker to undergo that occurrent mental episode.<sup>1</sup>

What I follow Uriah Kriegel (2013) in calling the *phenomenal intentionality research program* (PIRP) is a loosely connected research program, the aim of which is to explain intentionality in terms of phenomenal intentionality. Proponents of PIRP thus generally endorse what Kriegel calls the *basicness thesis*:

Basicness

“Phenomenal intentionality is a basic kind of intentionality and functions as a source of all intentionality” (Kriegel 2013: 5).

Proponents of ‘basicness’ include Mendelovici (2010, 2018), Montague (2016), Searle (1983, 1991), Strawson (2008), among others.<sup>2</sup>

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1 I use the term ‘fixed’ to remain neutral between theories on which the thesis is put in terms of ground, constitutive characterization, determination, or supervenience.

2 The basicness thesis is so widely endorsed by proponents of PIRP that in their *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article about phenomenal intentionality, Bourget & Mendelovici (2017) call it the ‘phenomenal intentionality theory’.

What are the different ‘kinds’ of intentionality to which Kriegel’s quote refers? And, relatedly: what kinds of things (specifically, mental things) have phenomenal intentionality, and what kinds of things have intentionality more generally? Obviously in order for some mental state or mental process to have phenomenal intentionality it must have phenomenal character – there must be something that it is like to undergo that mental process.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the focus of proponents of phenomenal intentionality is typically on mental activities like perceiving, imagining, and occurrent episodes of thinking.<sup>4</sup>

We can contrast occurrent mental events with non-occurrent mental states. Occurrent mental events (purportedly) have phenomenal intentionality, whereas non-occurrent mental states have intentionality but not phenomenal character - there is nothing it is like to have the belief that snow is cold, when you are not thinking about snow.<sup>5</sup> What I mean by mental states (sometimes called ‘standing states’) are non-occurrent attitudes, such as beliefs, and long term desires and fears, which are instantiated by an agent regardless of their current mental activity.

Mental states are often thought of as relational states, (we posit the existence of belief, desire, fear, etc. *relations*) and the relata are either individuals and propositions, where a subject S bears a relation to a propositions *p* (as in “Jon believes that it is snowing”, “Hannah desires that we have wine with dinner”) or individuals and objects, where a subject S bears a relation to an object O (as in “Bryce loves dogs”, “Casey desires cornbread”). Because it is fairly common to do so, I will talk as though mental states are relational, but nothing hinges on this assumption; the important point is that mental states have contents. To keep things simple, my focus in this paper will be on belief states.

Persistent mental states, like belief, do not have any associated phenomenal character.<sup>6</sup> Consider an attitude ascription like “Biggs believes that snow is cold”.

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<sup>3</sup> I take it that phenomenal character is constitutive of phenomenal experience. Thus, in this paper, I tend to use the term ‘phenomenal character’ rather than ‘phenomenology’.

<sup>4</sup> It is common to refer to perceptual experiences as perceptual ‘states’, and to certain occurrent thoughts in which we perform a judgment as ‘occurrent beliefs’. Following Crane (2013), however, I will be careful in this paper to distinguish mental ‘events’ and ‘activities’, which are occurrent and conscious processes, from mental ‘states’, which are non-occurrent, non-conscious, and persistent. I will not refer to occurrent doxastic episodes as ‘occurrent beliefs’, but instead as ‘judgments’.

<sup>5</sup> Phenomenal character requires conscious activity, so it is at least a necessary condition on phenomenal intentionality that one be undergoing an occurrent mental event. Perhaps not all occurrent mental events necessarily have phenomenal character – that is, perhaps non-conscious occurrent mental activity lacks phenomenal character (though see Prinz 2010 for some discussion of the claim that all occurrent mental activity has a corresponding phenomenal character).

<sup>6</sup> It should be pointed out that the crucial distinction here is the one between conscious mental events and nonconscious mental states, not the one between occurrent and persistent mental episodes. It is, perhaps, possible to imagine an occurrent mental event that is ‘persistent’, in that it is ongoing (thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me).

Such an ascription is obviously made true by something going on with Biggs, and Biggs' mental life. But the aspect of Biggs' mental life that makes this ascription true has no apparent connection to any phenomenal experience Biggs is currently undergoing. The ascription is true even when Biggs is not undergoing an experience with any particular phenomenal character, such as when Biggs is asleep. It is also true when Biggs is undergoing an experience that has nothing to do with snow being cold, such as when Biggs is thinking about dogs, taking a math test, or paying very close attention to a film. It is even true of Biggs when Biggs is imagining hot snow.

Compare this with an ascription of an occurrent mental event, like "Wedge is considering a cold ice cream". This can only be true if Wedge is *currently* having a particular kind of thought, and undergoing a particular kind of phenomenal experience (characterized by the phenomenal character associated with her considering ice cream).

So, if the mental *state* of believing that snow is cold has intentional content, then it has non-phenomenal intentionality. As such, mental states have what I will call *persistent intentionality*. We can abstract this to a general conditional:

**NP** If the mental state of *believing that p* is an intentional state, then it has persistent intentionality.

We can now rephrase the basicness thesis as follows:

Basicness\*

Phenomenal intentionality functions as a source of persistent intentionality.

This is, of course, not something one can just claim. The burden of proof is on the proponent of basicness (and basicness\*) to say how it is that phenomenal intentionality can be the source of persistent intentionality, which is associated with non-conscious states.

Responses to this issue from proponents of phenomenal intentionality can be sorted into three groups, in terms of the explanation given for the truth of the conditional in [NP]. *Eliminativists* explain the conditional in [NP] by arguing for the falsity of the antecedent. They simply insist that non-conscious mental states do not have content (basicness is thus vacuously true). Eliminativism is defended by [Mendelovici \(2010\)](#) and [Strawson \(2008\)](#). *Inflationists* reject the conditional in [NP] altogether, and take the difficult position of arguing that persistent mental states have phenomenal intentionality. Finally, *dispositionalists* argue for an explanation of the

truth of the consequent in terms of a dispositional relationship to occurrent mental events that have phenomenal intentionality.<sup>7</sup>

I take dispositional accounts to be the most promising explanation for the intentionality of standing states open to proponents of PIRP. Most proponents of PIRP endorse some sort of dispositional account; it is the account of standing states that lets proponents of PIRP avoid commitment to far more radical theses than ‘basicness’ (like the claim that persistent mental states have phenomenal character). As such, dispositional accounts will be the focus of the remainder of this paper. However, I will briefly say something about why I think eliminativist accounts are off track.<sup>8</sup>

Though I do not hope to give a full account of its difficulties here, I think that eliminativism is an untenable position for proponents of PIRP. Searle notes that occurrent thoughts “represent their conditions of satisfaction only under certain aspects and those aspects must matter to the agent” (Searle 1991: 50). In other words, the aspect under which an occurrent thought presents itself to an agent must be such that they can differentiate that thought from other thoughts. I think a very natural thing to conclude from this is that an agent must *believe* that the thought she is having (for example, a thought that B is red) represents the world in such-and-such a way (that it represents B, and that it represents redness). So, belief ascriptions play an explanatory role in how agents individuate phenomenally intentional thoughts, and thus proponents of PIRP will have a difficult time committing to an eliminativist position.

### 3 The Dispositional Account of Persistent Intentionality

In this section I will give what I take to be the strongest version of the dispositional account. This draws not only on work by PIRP proponents like Bourget, Kriegel, and Searle, but also on recent work by Peter Hanks (2011, 2015) and Scott Soames (2013, 2014, 2015, 2016).

Dispositionalism about persistent intentionality holds that mental states “are simply dispositions to have phenomenal intentional states, and that these dispositions get their contents from the phenomenal intentional states that they are dispositions to bring about” (Bourget & Mendelovici 2017). So, the dispositional account of the intentionality of standing states, put very simply, is just the claim that ascriptions of

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<sup>7</sup> These distinctions are discussed at length in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on ‘Phenomenal Intentionality’ (Bourget & Mendelovici 2017). My use of the terms ‘eliminativism’ and ‘inflationism’ correspond with the way these distinctions are discussed in that article as well.

<sup>8</sup> While I do not offer a direct criticism of inflationism, I think it is a difficult view to endorse. Crane (2013) provides perhaps the most compelling reason to think that an inflationist account is mistaken. Roughly, his argument is that occurrent thoughts are diachronic processes and so they must have contents with diachronic properties. Since standing mental states are persistent, they must involve contents of a different kind.

the form “S believes that *p*” are true iff S is disposed to undergo an occurrent mental episode with a phenomenal character that fixes the content *p*.

This, of course, cannot be the whole story. A disposition to have an occurrent thought with the phenomenal intentional content *p* does not always correspond to a standing belief that *p*. Imagine I have a very active imagination, and I like to frequently think about flying from my office on the back of a dragon. The fact that I am disposed to undergo an occurrent thought with the content that I fly from my office on the back of a dragon does not mean that I believe that I will fly from my office on the back of a dragon.<sup>9</sup> It seems as though I could be disposed to undergo an occurrent mental episode with phenomenal intentionality *p*, but that I may nevertheless not believe that *p*. Beliefs must, on the dispositional account, be treated as dispositions to undergo an occurrent thought of a particular *kind*.

In his survey of the relationship between intentional states and phenomenally conscious mental activity, Bourget (2010) spells out in slightly greater detail the relationship between mental states and occurrent thoughts. In the passage below, he notes that the occurrent thought that a believer is disposed to undergo must be an occurrent thought of a particular kind (emphasis mine):

“[N]on-occurrent states seem to be constituted at least in part by dispositions to have relevant occurrent states. We would not say that I believe monkeys like bananas if I were not disposed to think (occurrently, **with a certain conviction**) that monkeys like bananas upon being suitably prompted in the right conditions. It is on the face of it at least in part in virtue of my disposition to token relevant occurrent states that I count (while asleep) as believing that monkeys like bananas. If this observation extends to all non-occurrent states, then non-occurrent states merely have derived intentionality (Bourget 2010: 35)”.

Bourget notes that one must be disposed to have an occurrent thought with a particular property of conviction, and that conviction must be ‘aimed’ at the phenomenally-fixed content in question. I follow Crane (2013), Soames (2015), and others in giving a name to the kind of thought that has this particular property: *judgment*. We are now in a position to give the dispositionalist account of belief:

Dispositionalism

*s* believes that *p* iff *s* has a disposition to *judge* that *p*

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<sup>9</sup> It might explain other beliefs of mine, though. For example, if I am committed to imagining dragons as looking a certain way, it might explain beliefs that I have about how dragons look.

We should be as precise as possible about what judgment is. As Bourget notes, judgment is a thought with a particular kind of conviction about a content. Frequently, judgment is treated as either the occurrent analogue of belief, or explicitly referred to as ‘occurrent belief’ (Audi 1994, Bartlett 2018, Pautz 2013).<sup>10</sup>

Beyond treating it as an occurrent analogue to belief, very few people working in PIRP, or on phenomenal consciousness more generally, have given a precise characterization of what judgment is. However, several philosophers working on projects that attempt to naturalize propositional content have given characterizations of judgment (Hanks 2011, Soames 2015).

Soames takes occurrent thoughts to be a kind of mental predication; what it is to entertain the thought that B is red is to predicate redness of B. To put this in terms of phenomenal intentionality: it would be to undergo an episode where the phenomenal character predicates redness of B. One way of entertaining the thought that B is red (of predicating redness of B) is to do so in a way that *commits* the thinker to this predication. This notion of performing an act of predication in a committal way is what Soames takes to be judgment.

Because of the ease with which this account extends to the phenomenal intentionality program, I will take a satisfactory definition of judgment to be one in which an individual predicates a property of an object (perhaps she imagines the object having such-and-such a property) and does so in a committal way. I do not think that any of the claims I make going forward rely on *this* particular definition of a judgment, and so I accept that there may be even better alternatives.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to say something briefly about dispositions as well. First, I take it that the dispositionalist does not think you need to be disposed at all times to judge that *p* in order to believe that *p*. One thing we might say is that it is *sufficient* if, when you perform the act of considering whether *p*, you are such that you will judge *p* true. There will be many instances where someone is not in a position to consider whether *p*, but nevertheless they believe that *p*; the point is just that the dispositionalist ought to accept the following conditional:

**CON** If S believes that *p* then  
(if S were to consider whether *p*, then S would judge that *p*)

We might think that this is a problematic definition: someone might believe something *p*, and be disposed to assert *p* to herself, but if she were to enter into thoughtful

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10 As I have noted already, I follow Crane (2013) in insisting on a distinction between occurrent and standing intentionality that precludes this way of speaking.

11 For example, Hanks (2011) treats all acts of predication as themselves committing, rejecting the notion that a judgment is an act of mental predication performed in any particular way. Hanks’ account rejects the force/content distinction, and so I think a great deal of the appeal of Hanks’ view over Soames’ will turn on what one makes of this distinction.

consideration regarding  $p$ , she might eventually come to realize that she should not believe  $p$ . Clearly, however, what is relevant to the dispositionalist is the fact that she is disposed to assert  $p$  to herself, and not that she is in some sense capable of figuring out that she is not actually justified in believing that  $p$ . I think this apparent issue just turns on a colloquial notion of ‘considering’ as meaning something like: thoughtful deliberation. By ‘consider’, I just mean something like: if the thought that  $p$  were to occur to S.

#### 4 Belief without Disposition to Judge

In this section I will argue that beliefs are not to be characterized as dispositions to judge, or as dispositions to have a mental episode with phenomenal intentionality of any kind. I will do this by giving an example in which the following hold:

- S believes that  $p$
- S is not disposed to judge that  $p$
- S is in fact disposed to judge that  $\neg p$

The aim of any account of persistent intentionality is to explain how someone’s non-occurrent thought informs their occurrent decision making processes.

Belief plays an important role in intentional action. It is a widely accepted platitude about intentional action that if  $s$  intends to  $\Phi$ , then  $s$  must have a certain set of beliefs. In particular,  $s$  must believe that she can  $\Phi$  (Anscombe 1963). Even accepting a weaker version of this, there will often be things you can figure out about someone’s beliefs on the basis of what she is doing. We only need to recognize that one of the explanatory desiderata of any non-eliminative account of belief is to explain the role that persistent belief plays in action. This is because certain kinds of conscious decisions require beliefs, and thus someone rationally making that decision is good evidence (perhaps not incontrovertible) that they have the relevant belief.

I will now give a counterexample to the dispositionalism endorsed by proponents of phenomenal intentionality.<sup>12</sup> Imagine an individual, Tom, who is riding a stationary bike at his university’s gym, and has placed his office keys in the cupholder of the stationary bike. Tom has a usual routine: when he finishes riding the stationary bike he puts his keys back in his pocket, walks across campus to his office, unlocks

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<sup>12</sup> The case I present bears some similarity to cases discussed by Gendler (2008) and Schwitzgebel (2001, 2010). These are cases where agents have mixed dispositional profiles; they display some of the characteristics of a dispositional belief that  $p$  but lack others. Gendler and Schwitzgebel use these cases to argue for the existence of belief-like mental states. In the next section, I will discuss how the belief-like mental states proposed in that literature might be applied to the case I present here.



his office door, and eats an energy bar that he has left on his desk. This routine is so usual for Tom that he typically undertakes it with very little deliberation.

Today, however, Tom forgets to take his keys out of the cupholder of the stationary bike. So he starts to walk back to his office without the keys in his pocket. This is an intentional action: Tom intends to go to his office, open his large office door, and eat the energy bar on his desk. I think we can claim that Tom *believes* that he has his office keys in his pocket.<sup>13</sup> I think that this claim is supported by the following features of the case: Tom is engaged in intentional action that appears to be underwritten by the belief that his keys are in his pocket. Tom knows that the task he is engaged in can only be accomplished if he has his keys on him.<sup>14</sup> Further, imagine that I am familiar enough with Tom's routine that when I see Tom I am warranted in asserting 'Tom believes his office keys are in his pocket'. From this description of the case we can conclude that it is true that Tom believes that his office keys are in his pocket. Thus, the dispositional account should predict that Tom is disposed to judge that his office keys are in his pocket.

Now imagine that someone prompts Tom to judge whether he has his keys. I take it to be possible, that Tom — like many of us who have been in similar situations — is disposed to judge that he left his keys at the gym. So in other words, not only is Tom not disposed to judge that the keys to his office are in his pocket, Tom is actually disposed to judge that the keys to his office are *not* in his pocket.<sup>15</sup>

Recall the conditional [CON], which says that if S believes that  $p$  then (if S were to consider whether  $p$ , then S would judge that  $p$ ). Tom believes that the keys are in his pocket, and so by [CON] if Tom is to consider whether the keys are in his pocket, then he should judge that they are. But instead, when Tom considers whether the keys are in his pocket he judges that they are not. In other words: Tom believes that  $p$  and Tom is disposed to judge that  $\neg p$ .

It is entirely possible that Tom is in blissful ignorance, and would judge that his keys are in fact in his pocket. But the point is just that in either case (whether he is or is not disposed to judge that the keys are in his pocket) he still believes that the keys are in his pocket. Whether Tom is disposed to judge that the keys are in his

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13 There is room for the dispositionalist to resist this claim, which I will discuss in a bit.

14 This does not require that we accept some sort of problematic closure principle on Tom's beliefs. Tom's intentions can be stated in terms of an intention to use his key (i.e. an intention to open his heavy office door). This also makes it difficult to resist the claim that he has the key belief on the basis of the claim that he is acting out of some other belief, like a belief that he can open his office door. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helpful suggestion here.

15 Tom would also probably report that he *did* believe he had his keys. When someone prompts him to judge whether he has his keys (perhaps by asking 'do you have your keys on you?') Tom might undergo the occurrent judgment, and then say something like 'I thought I had them on me!' Again, this phenomenon will be familiar to many of us who have been in similar circumstances.

pocket, or whether he is disposed to judge that the keys are not in his pocket clearly makes no difference to whether or not Tom believes that the keys are in his pocket.<sup>16</sup>

## 5 Belief, or something else?

One reply to the counterexample is that because Tom is disposed to judge that his keys are at the gym, we simply have to accept the fact that Tom believes his keys are at the gym (even though he is acting as though he believes they are in his pocket).<sup>17</sup> But endorsing the claim that Tom believes that his keys are at the gym raises a problem for the dispositionalist account that I addressed in § 3: that the view overgenerates with respect to what we intuitively judge an agent to believe. The theory might commit us to the claim that Tom believes his keys are at the gym, but this is an unintuitive result. Of course, this kind of radical overgeneration of beliefs can be curtailed by adding constraints to the dispositionalist account; however, I do not see how this can be done (in a non-*ad hoc* way) without eliminating Tom's belief that his keys are at the gym in the process.

Further, I think that to claim that Tom believes his keys are at the gym would require us to reexamine the link between unconscious belief and action. On this view, Tom's 'belief' that the keys are at the gym does not play any role in Tom's actions, whereas the proposition that the keys are in Tom's pocket plays a very standard belief-like role in Tom's actions. Perhaps common views about the connection between belief and rational action require reexamination, but these seem like fairly shaky grounds from which to proceed with such a task.

Another objection might be raised that Tom neither believes nor disbelieves that he has his keys in his pocket; he is merely acting out of habit, or on the basis of some other belief.<sup>18</sup> I think that further evidence can be given that the best explanation for Tom's behavior is that he has the belief in question. Specifically, Tom's behavior is complex, and varies in ways that are sensitive to changes that connect with the content of an underlying belief that the keys are in his pocket.

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16 It might be claimed that Tom's disposition is 'finked'. Cases where dispositions are finked are cases where something *a* is disposed to do something  $\phi$ , given a certain event *X*, but every time *a* is triggered to  $\phi$  by *X*, *this* triggers a 'finking' mechanism that prevents  $\phi$  from happening (Lewis 1997). So we might say that Tom initially had a disposition to judge that the keys are in his pocket, but Tom's act of introspection triggers a change in his dispositional profile. But it is worth noting that this case is quite unlike the sorts of cases of finkish dispositions that Lewis (and others) have discussed. In the case I present, the triggering event is an act of introspection, which is the very same thing that changes Tom's dispositions. In other words, there is no finking mechanism distinct from the trigger. If what Tom is disposed to judge changes when he performs an act of judgment, then could it really have been what he was disposed to judge at all?

17 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection; thanks to Josh Dever and Sinan Dogramaci for helpful discussion in addressing the issues raised in this section.

18 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to address this concern.

For example, certain of Tom's thoughts and actions that are not part of Tom's routine are also best explained by the belief that he has his keys on him. Tom may be thinking about grabbing something in his car on his way to the office (we can imagine Tom's car key is on the same ring as his office key). Or Tom might make a deliberate decision to enter his building through the side door, which requires a key, and not the front door, which does not. Tom might even believe things because they are entailed by the belief about his keys. Imagine Tom's office manager told him that the next time he's out of the office with his keys on him, Tom has to stop by the Keys building to have an extra copy made. Tom might think about how he *should* really be going to the Keys building before he eats his snack. He might think: *I'm going to go to my office, eat my snack, and then walk right over to the Keys building.*

Pursuing the line that Tom is merely acting out of habit, rather than belief, is also dangerously eliminativist. To see how it is dangerously eliminativist, consider a contrast case in which Tom actually does put the keys in his pocket, heads to his office and, if prompted, would judge that his keys are on him. It is hard to accept that a dispositionalist would want to describe this case as one in which Tom neither believes nor disbelieves he has his keys on him. But if we appeal to habit as an explanation for his action, then this is exactly what we need to say, since there is nothing psychologically different for Tom between the two cases.

Another reply to the counterexample contextualizes it in an ongoing discussion concerning 'belief like' mental states.<sup>19</sup> Gendler (2008) and Schwitzgebel (2001, 2010) contend that many of our *apparently* belief-driven actions are actually underwritten by mental phenomena that are merely 'belief like'; Gendler argues for a belief-like mental state that she calls 'alief', and Schwitzgebel for the possibility that agents can be 'in between' belief and disbelief with respect to particular contents. The cases used to demonstrate these phenomena are similar to the above counterexample. Gendler and Schwitzgebel consider cases where someone acts in a way that *suggests* that they believe that *p*, but because of the presence of explicit beliefs that are in conflict with *p*, we are led to the conclusion that the agent does not believe that *p*. For example: we might imagine someone who realizes on the train on the way to work that they left their ID at home (i.e., they sincerely endorse the proposition that their ID has been left at home), but nevertheless they absentmindedly search for it in their bag when they get to the office.

The case I present in this paper has an important difference from the cases discussed in the alief / in-between belief literature. In those cases, some belief that *p* *would* play an explanatory role in the action X being performed by an individual, except that the agent's actions are accompanied by assertions of, or actions in accordance with, beliefs in contradictory contents (like  $\neg p$ ). As Albahari (2014)

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<sup>19</sup> See Albahari 2014, Borgoni 2015, Gendler 2008, Mandelbaum 2013, 2014, Schwitzgebel 2001, 2010.

notes, those cases are “cases where a subject sincerely endorses P while displaying discordant strains of not-P in her behaviour and emotion” (Albahari 2014: 701). Thus, we are meant to conclude, in those cases, that the agent’s action X only seems to be belief-guided. But Tom’s case is different; until he considers the matter, none of Tom’s behaviors seem to be underwritten by the belief that his keys are still in the exercise bike. It is not something that he ‘sincerely endorses’, nor is it something that we are tempted to claim he believes.

Can Tom’s actions nevertheless be explained by a belief-like notion, such as alief or in-between belief? I wish to point out some difficulties for such a strategy. As Mandelbaum (2013) points out, if something like alief is meant to underwrite action, then it can be one of two things: a kind of habit, or a kind of intentional mental state.<sup>20</sup> I think we have ruled out the first as a plausible explanation for Tom’s case; Tom’s actions seem to be robust enough to suggest that they are underwritten by an intentional mental state. But now we face a familiar problem. If intentionality is to be grounded in phenomenal experience, and if alief is an intentional mental state, then the same issues arise: if alief (and in-between belief) are intentional mental states then the same question about what grounds the intentionality of Tom’s belief that his keys are in his pocket can be raised for his alief that the keys are in his pocket.<sup>21</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

I have argued against an attractive way for theorists who take phenomenal intentionality to be the most fundamental kind of intentionality to explain standing states. More broadly, I have challenged the notion of identifying standing belief states with dispositions to  $\Phi$ , where  $\Phi$  is some occurrent, conscious mental activity with phenomenal character. I acknowledge that this is not conclusive, but I think that enough has been said to show that there is a real problem for proponents of dispositionalism within the PIRP framework.

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20 Mandelbaum offers a compelling argument against a notion of alief, holding that it either collapses into something like habit (and is thus not of great explanatory value), or into belief. We might follow Mandelbaum in thinking that cases like these present cases of contradictory beliefs: Tom both believes that his keys are in his pocket and that they are at the gym. Such a claim further exposes the limits of the dispositionalist account under consideration, as we still need an explanation for Tom’s ‘belief’ that his keys are in his pocket and a further explanation for why it is unintuitive that he believes the keys are at the gym.

21 Similarly, we might think that Tom’s attitude with respect to the proposition that the keys are in his pocket is somehow intermediate between not believing and believing. Perhaps this is a promising line for the PIRP proponent to pursue, but it is not entirely clear that they have any recourse to an explanation like this. We can explain ‘in-between’ beliefs if we assume that belief is “built upon a broad dispositional base” (Schwitzgebel 2010: 533). That is, if some but not all of the dispositions necessary for a belief that p are activated, then someone might be in-between believing and disbelieving p. It is not clear how such an account could be adapted to the basicness thesis.

Although this counterexample specifically addresses dispositional accounts of belief given by proponents of phenomenal intentionality, the criticism I have raised will be a problem for anyone who endorses a dispositional account of belief which holds that standing states are dispositions to have occurrent mental states (for example: Soames 2015). By contrast, a version of dispositionalism that appeals to both behavioral dispositions and dispositions to undergo certain mental activities will have no such problem (Audi 1972, Schwitzgebel 2002).

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