

Phenomenal Presence

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1. Introduction

One frequently encounters the thesis that experience is *transparent* or *diaphanous* in contemporary philosophical discussions of perceptual experience. Michael Tye provides a recent and representative statement of this thesis:

When you introspect your visual experience, the only particulars of which you are aware are the external ones making up the scene before your eyes. . . . Your awareness is of the external surfaces and how *they* appear. The qualities you experience are the ones the surfaces apparently have. Your experience is thus transparent to you. When you try to focus upon it, you ‘see’ right through it, as it were, to the things apparently outside and their apparent qualities. (Tye [2002] 139)

According to experiential transparency’s advocates, all that perceptual experience even seems to present us with are objective entities and their sensible characteristics. No amount of phenomenological reflection will enable us to appreciate the intrinsic features of perceptual experience as such.

The question of whether all experiences are transparent occasions spirited disagreement. These disagreements, however, are premature. I will argue that the most common interpretation of experiential transparency’s significance is laden with substantive and ultimately extraneous metaphysical commitments. I divest this inflated interpretation of its unwarranted encumbrances and consolidate the precipitate into a position I call *Core Transparency* (§2).

Core Transparency is a thesis about experience’s *presentational character*. We open our eyes and a world is before us. Someone strikes a tuning fork, and a sound is simply present. In all sensory modalities, the objects of perceptual experience are *there, present* to us, in a way that the objects of most beliefs and judgments are not. According to Core Transparency, it is in the disclosure of

that which is central to experience's presentational character, an intrinsic and irreducibly phenomenal aspect of experience I call *phenomenal presence*, that transparency's significance principally consists (§3).

Though valuable in itself, the consequences of this analysis extend well beyond the clarity it provides to discussions of transparency. For phenomenal presence is uniquely positioned to illuminate the relationship between perceptual experience's most important features: its intentionality and its phenomenality. One popular account of how these features are related, namely, *representationalism*, asserts, roughly, that an experience's representational features completely determine its phenomenal features. The thesis that all experiences are transparent is often taken to support representationalism; representationalists maintain that their account best (or uniquely) explains such transparency.¹

I will argue that experiential transparency is far from being a solid foundation upon which representationalists can rest their arguments. The phenomenon is, when interpreted properly, not only among the view's greatest obstacles, it supports a converse orientation. The position I defend comprises two main claims.

1. The representational features of experience, understood in isolation from experiential phenomenality, neither constitute nor explain phenomenal presence. Consequently, the representational features of experience neither determine completely nor explain exhaustively experiential phenomenality (§4).
2. Phenomenal presence is not representational, but is nevertheless the minimal realization of experiential intentionality (§5).

2. The Purported Significance of Experiential Transparency

Though transparency's significance is subject to a multiplicity of (often ambiguous and heterogeneous) interpretations, one can discern an emerging consensus over its general form.

- (T) The sensuous elements that one phenomenally appreciates in an experience are (with varying emphases) always *appreciated as* (i) public, (ii) objective, (iii) mind-independent, and/or (iv) external (that is, distally located).²

According to (T), when one undergoes, say, a visual experience as of a tree, the sensuous green one appreciates is appreciated as a quality *of* the tree's

leaves. One appreciates the sensuous green as being, being instantiated in, or being about an objective entity in one's external environment. Moreover, no amount of phenomenological reflection will alter the apparent externality of an experience's sensuous elements or reveal novel elements with a different apparent ontological status. So if transparency holds generally, one will never appreciate an experience's sensuous elements *as* intrinsic features of either the experience itself or oneself *qua* experiential subject.³

This interpretation is, at least in comparison to many characterizations that were advanced during the initial stages of transparency's recent era of popularity, narrowly phenomenological. It concerns only *apparent* ontological classifications and does not involve a commitment to *Revelation*, that is, the thesis that the intrinsic nature of a sensuous element is fully revealed by the phenomenal appreciation of that element in a standard experience (cf. Johnston [1992]). According to these earlier interpretations, undergoing or reflecting upon an experience discloses the apparent ontological status of the sensuous elements one appreciates therein and Revelation guarantees that these elements are as one appreciates them to be.⁴

To abandon Revelation, as (T) does, is to recognize that phenomenological reflection, *by itself*, is metaphysically neutral. This neutrality is twofold. First, phenomenological reflection, by itself, does not disclose the ontological status of an experience's sensuous elements. (T)'s advocates readily admit that phenomenological reflection does not *immediately* yield conclusions about the metaphysical status of what one appreciates in experience. For example, Gilbert Harman concedes that "one might be aware of intrinsic features of experience without being aware of them as intrinsic features of experience" (Harman [1990] 42). Similarly, both Michael Tye and Alex Byrne hold that transparency, on its own, does not speak against sense-datum accounts of experience.⁵ So even if we always appreciate an experience's sensuous elements as being or qualifying physical objects in a publicly accessible environment, it may turn out that they are, as a matter of fact, instantiated by amalgams of sense-data or are intrinsic features of one's experiential states.⁶

Second, phenomenological reflection, by itself, does not disclose the ontological status of experiential episodes themselves. Perhaps one has an experience with a particular phenomenal character in virtue of being in a representational state with a special kind of content or a special functionally specified role. Perhaps one has this experience in virtue of standing in some primitive relation of acquaintance or direct awareness to an appropriate class of entities. Perhaps one has this experience by virtue of the divine dispensation of an omnipotent god. Whatever the source, it is invisible. The means by which a scene becomes experientially present to one is not itself phenomenally appreciable.

Despite the relative restraint of (T), many who accept it nevertheless aspire to the yield of its metaphysically indulgent counterpart. If (T) is correct, then

undergoing an experience always involves the appreciation of something as *having certain features*, namely, those that constitute membership in one or more of the classes enumerated in (T). This is best explained, the argument goes, if experiential phenomenality is representational in nature. That is, for an experience to possess a phenomenal character is for it to make a claim that something is a certain way and such claims are evaluable for veridicality. These contentful experiences, the argument continues, will be radically (and problematically) misleading unless things are, at least in standard cases, as we appreciate them to be.⁷

It should concern those who advance such arguments that parallel arguments exist for incompatible views. For example, many argue that transparency is best explained by an explicitly non-representational form of *naïve realism*.⁸ But of even greater concern is this: the narrowly phenomenological interpretation of transparency against which all parties have agreed to measure the explanatory virtues of their preferred accounts is, I contend, simply false. Let us begin with an examination of two rare but illustrative sorts of experience that serve as counterexamples to (T).

Case 1: Ganzfeld Experiences. A ganzfeld is a visual field that is completely permeated with a constant and homogeneous sensuous color, say, a determinate shade of blue.⁹ The advocate of transparency is correct to this extent: the sensuous blue that is present in a ganzfeld experience is not appreciated as being an intrinsic property of the experience itself or of oneself qua experiential subject.

Does this mean that one appreciates the sensuous blue as qualifying (or as being) an objective, mind-independent entity? Not at all. When one undergoes such an experience, one does not appreciate anything as possessed of the phenomenal characteristics that constitute the alleged world-disclosing phenomenality of our ordinary perceptual experiences. There is no figure-ground contrast, no manifestation of diachronic perceptual constancies, and no opportunity for perspectival variation. Relations of relative, spatial location are either severely limited or altogether absent, so one does not even appreciate the sensuous expanse as being a properly extended region of space.¹⁰ Finally, one need not (and often does not) appreciate the ganzfeld as distally located; at most, one can say that one appreciates the sensuous blue as being *before* one, where “before” does not connote “in front of” or any other notion that involves apparent spatial egocentricity.¹¹

Case 2: Spatially Punctiliar Experiences. Damage to one’s occipital cortex can result in the diminution of one’s visual field. That which is lost is not replaced with darkness, the so-called brain grey that permeates our visual field when external optical stimulation is cut off. The visual system registers nothing in these lost regions; the field itself simply shrinks.¹² It is possible in principle for one’s brain to atrophy in such a way that one undergoes visual experiences

that are spatially punctiliar.¹³ These are not experiences as of a point of light in a sea of darkness, that is, an isolated phosphene. One who possesses such a visual system would undergo visual experiences in which a single phenomenal point, *and nothing more*, is appreciable.¹⁴

A sensuous element is *present* in a spatially punctiliar experience. But one does not appreciate the sensuous point as possessed of features that constitute one or more of the classes enumerated in (T). Moreover, this case undermines not only the necessity of apparent three-dimensional spatiality in experience (as ganzfelds do), but that of apparent two-dimensional spatiality as well (as ganzfelds may not). That is, the possibility of spatially punctiliar experiences shows that a widely held constraint, namely, “If *x* is visually aware of *y* (if *x* sees *y*), then *y* must *look* extended to *x*,” is false.¹⁵

What conclusion should we draw from the possibility of these sorts of experience? One response is to maintain the interpretation of transparency expressed in (T), but abandon its universality. These and other atypical experiences show, according to this approach, that transparency is a normal but not ubiquitous phenomenon.

But I think this approach is mistaken. The two sorts of experience we have considered are indeed counterexamples to (T). But (T)’s inadequacies extend well beyond these atypical cases. I noted earlier that an experience’s phenomenal character is compatible with a wide range of possibilities about both the experience’s nature and the nature of the sensuous elements one appreciates therein. But the retreat to *apparent* ontological status does not place its advocate on safe ground. For a typical experience’s phenomenal character is not only *compatible* with, say, a sense-datum account of perceptual experience, it is *exactly what we ought to expect* from a sense-datum account. Competing philosophical accounts of perception—for example, representationalism, naïve realism, projectivism, and sense-datum theories—issue identical phenomenological “predictions.” So even in unexceptional cases, experiential phenomenality, by itself, is silent with respect to the classifications in (T).¹⁶

3. Core Transparency and Phenomenal Presence

Should we conclude then that no experiences are transparent? To do so would be to deny that we can educe any important insight from the sort of phenomenological observations to which the champions of experiential transparency appeal. This, I believe, is to go too far. Though transparency’s significance is far more modest than is commonly proclaimed, its advocates are pointing to a genuine phenomenon. The proper response, I contend, is to uphold the thesis that all experiences are transparent, but to employ an interpretation of transparency that is free of unwarranted commitments.

The seed of an appropriately parsimonious interpretation is already contained in our examinations of ganzfeld and spatially punctiliar experiences. It seems that no matter how simple or peculiar an experience may be, we always appreciate its sensuous elements as being *present* or *before us* in a way that the objects of most beliefs and judgments are not. That is, when we phenomenally appreciate a sensuous element in an experience, we appreciate it as being both something other than ourselves and as standing in opposition to ourselves. This view, which I call *Core Transparency (CT)*, can be formulated in two interdependent ways.

- (CT1) The sensuous elements that one phenomenally appreciates in an experience are always appreciated as *other*.
- (CT2) The sensuous elements that one phenomenally appreciates in an experience are never appreciated as being, being instantiated in, or being about *the self* qua experiential subject (or a state/mode thereof).

I will call the experiential nexus of *self* and *other* to which this pair of formulations refer *phenomenal presence*. Phenomenal presence is central to the *presentational character* of experience and it is in the disclosure of phenomenal presence that transparency's significance principally consists.¹⁷

If Core Transparency is to avoid (T)'s fate, we must be careful to distinguish the predicates “__ appreciates *x* as other” and “__ appreciates *x* as (being... the) self” from similar expressions that we have already jettisoned, for example, “__ appreciates *x* as objective” and “__ appreciates *x* as distally located.” For (T)'s failure stems not from the particular classes or properties it employs, but from the very appeal to classification. If phenomenal presence involved the attribution of properties to, or the classification of, an experience's sensuous elements, then it would determine a veridicality-evaluable claim. But as we have already seen, the metaphysical neutrality of phenomenological reflection guarantees that transparency, by itself, makes no such claims.

What then in the significance of (CT)? We can, as a first pass, describe the situation as follows. To undergo a sensuous experience is (in part) to appreciate an element *as other* or *as before* one; it is (in part) to appreciate a manifest opposition between *the self*—that before which the other is present—and *the other*—that which is present before the self. But phenomenal presence does not consist in the instantiation of some relation, say, *experience e presents y to z* by members of two distinct kinds, namely, *other* and *self*. The distinction between self and other is rather an oblique communication of sensuous experience's basic and intrinsic phenomenal structure. Sensuous experiences are phenomenally articulate unities and to appreciate something as other is to appreciate its invariant position within this bipartite, phenomenal articulation. I will elucidate this view by examining the two formulations of (CT) in turn.

(CT1)—According to (CT1), experience is necessarily presentational; there can be no appreciation of a sensuous element in experience that is not also an appreciation of it as other. This is true even of pain experiences and cases of perceptual imagination. Insofar as one appreciates a sensuous element in such experiences, one appreciates it as other. There may be, in addition to this manifest otherness, a genuine phenomenal basis for associating some of these elements more intimately with the self than others: an appearance of subjectivity or interiority may be due to, respectively, a distinctive sense of ownership in bodily sensation or an appreciation of the subordinacy of imaginative phenomenality to the spontaneity of our mental agencies. But the sensuousness of these experiences guarantees that they involve an apparent confrontation with something other than oneself.

This is not because sensuous experience always involves the appreciation of something as having features that would ground a classification of kind, namely, the kind *other*, but because phenomenal presence does not involve veridicality-evaluable classifications at all. It is a category mistake to assess phenomenal presence in terms of success and failure. To appreciate a sensuous element as other is not to appreciate some mark possessed by that element; it does not consist in the apparent exemplification of some property or the apparent satisfaction of some criterion. It is rather to appreciate the sensuous element's position within the experience's basic phenomenal articulation. The occupation of such a phenomenal position by a sensuous element in an experience is no more subject to conditions of satisfaction or veridicality than is the occupation of a grammatical position by a proper name in a sentence.¹⁸

(CT2)—According to (CT2), the phenomenal appreciation of a sensuous element in experience can never be an appreciation of our selves, or the states/modes thereof, *as such*. Hume makes this point vividly when he reports on his attempts to do so:

When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.
(Hume [1739/1978] I.vi.6)

As a matter of ontology, we are *personal selves*—living, embodied human beings with complex psychological histories located within an objective, ordered world of public, physical objects. Perhaps it is possible for one to appreciate a sensuous element in experience that is, as a matter of fact, a feature of oneself qua personal. That is, there is nothing incoherent about the sensuous manifestation (and the correlative appreciation as other) of an intrinsic feature of a personal self. But as a matter of what is revealed in experience's

presentational character, experiential subjects are *phenomenal selves*. Thus conceived, the other is simply that which is present before the self; the nature of the phenomenal self is exhausted by the position it occupies within experience's phenomenal articulation.¹⁹

So the phenomenal self is not sensuously manifest in experience. For to be sensuous is, in part, to be appreciated as other, and to be appreciated as other is to occupy a particular position within experience's phenomenal articulation. The phenomenal self cannot occupy this position, it cannot be sensuous and present before one, without ceasing to be what it is. Any attempt to appreciate the phenomenal self or to appreciate the features, including structural features, of experience itself in the same manner as we appreciate an experience's sensuous elements is guaranteed to fail.²⁰

Phenomenal presence is not sensuous. But it is phenomenally appreciable. It is a mistake to suppose that an appreciation of phenomenal presence requires one to turn away from that which is present in experience and toward some isolated interiority. Sensuous experience is universally and intrinsically *directed* toward the other. But it is only through the presence of the other that the phenomenal self exists at all. The intrinsic orientation of experiential phenomenality toward the other phenomenally embodies its converse. To focus, as we must, on the other in experience is, *ipso actu*, to appreciate its position with respect to our phenomenal selves.

This is what the phenomenological observations that have so impressed the advocates of transparency reveal—not the apparent natures of that which is present in experience, but the aspect of experiential phenomenality that constitutes this appreciable presence itself.

4. The Explanatory Inadequacy of Representationalism

This essay's ultimate goal is to illuminate the relationship between the intentionality and the phenomenality of perceptual experience. Phenomenal presence bears a twofold significance for this project. Its first consequence is negative. I will argue in this section that phenomenal presence neither depends essentially upon nor is explanatorily grounded in the non-phenomenal, representational features of experience. Its second consequence is positive. Phenomenal presence is not representational, but is nevertheless the minimal realization of experiential intentionality (§5).

One account of how the intentionality and phenomenality of experience are related, namely *representationalism*, is overwhelmingly popular. It comprises (i) a representational account of experiential intentionality and (ii) a thesis of ontological supervenience.

Representationalism: (i) To undergo an experience is, inter alia, to be intentionally directed upon an entity in virtue of being in a state with one or more representational contents (that meet various conditions). (ii) An experience's phenomenal features supervene upon either (a) features of the experience's representational content(s), (b) features of the experiential state in virtue of which it has its representational content(s), and/or (c) represented features of the entities the experience represents.

As Alex Byrne correctly notes, representationalism “does not take a stand on whether phenomenal character can be *explained in terms of*, or *reduced to*, [representational features]—at least it doesn't if these claims don't follow from the mere fact of supervenience” (Byrne [2001] 204; cf. Horgan [1993]). But if the representationalist is to contribute to the project of understanding experiential phenomenality, she must *explain why* each basic and distinctive type of phenomenal feature supervenes upon a specific class of the experience's representational features.

Representationalism has the resources to provide adequate explanations for many of the relevant supervenience relations. In particular, it can explain how many of an experience's sensuous elements supervene upon specific features of the experience's representational content(s). That is, representationalism can in principle explain:

- (i) The scope of phenomenal appreciation—Why do I appreciate a sensuous patch of blue (rather than a sensuous patch of red) in the experience I am currently undergoing and why do I appreciate it as being circular and located three feet to my left (rather than as being rectangular and located three feet to my right)?
- (ii) The phenomenal differences between experiences—In virtue of what does the phenomenality of my experience of a red patch differ from the phenomenality of my experience of a blue patch? In virtue of what does the phenomenality of my visual experience of a circular object differ from the phenomenality of my tactile experience of the same circular object?
- (iii) Many distinctive features of experiential phenomenality—What explains the complexity, richness, determinacy, and particularity of, say, my typical visual experiences?²¹

But even if we grant that experience's representational features not only determine but explain these aspects of experiential phenomenality, we have not thereby conceded that the representationalist has successfully executed her explanatory project. For the representationalist must not only explain *what* is phenomenally present in experience; she must explain the phenomenality of this presence itself. There are numerous representational states, such

as beliefs, judgments, desires, and other propositional attitudes, that lack a presentational character altogether. What representational facts explain the manifestation of phenomenal presence in experience and the absence of phenomenal presence in other contentful states?²²

There are several approaches available to the representationalist. I will focus on the shortcomings of three: (i) appeals to content, (ii) appeals to functional role, and (iii) appeals to primitive forms of representation. I will then offer reasons for thinking that these attempts do not fail because of their respective idiosyncrasies. Representationalism's explanatory limitations are, I contend, endemic to the theory.

Approach 1: Appeal to Content. The representationalist can advert to the distinctive kinds of representational content experiences possess, for example, non-conceptual, analog, pictorial, and so on, to explain experience's presentational character. But this view is a non-starter. First, the candidate contents can be attributed to representational states that lack a presentational character. For example, it is not unreasonable to think that there are sub-personal states generated in vision that non-conceptually represent changes in light intensity (Tye [2000] 62; cf. Stalnaker [1998]). So the possession of such contents is not sufficient to demarcate phenomenally presentational states.

Second, and more important, *being present* is not a property of experiences' sensuous elements. According to representationalism, the phenomenal appreciation of x in an experience is constituted (in part) by the inclusion of x , or an entity that determines x , in the content of the experience's constituent representation. To say that an experience, in addition to representing an object, must represent that object as being present, is to introduce an unnecessary and problematic redundancy.

For these reasons, most representationalists do not attempt to explain an experience's presentational character in terms of its representational content but rather offer explanations that appeal to the distinctive characteristics of experiential representation itself. That is, they maintain that,

[representationalism] is not the view that the *content* of an intentional state determines its nature qua mental state without remainder... it is the doctrine that the content of an experience *plus* the fact that the experience represents the content as obtaining in the way distinctive of perceptual representation are what determines the experience's nature without remainder. (Jackson [2007] 58; cf. Chalmers [2004] and Martin [2002] 378)

These attempts typically appeal to the distinctive functional role of experiential representation (approach 2) or introduce primitive forms of experiential representation (approach 3).

Approach 2: Appeal to Functional Role. Representationalists often claim that it is experience's functional role that makes experiential representation distinctive. For example, Tye claims that

experiences and feelings, *qua* bearers of phenomenal character, play a certain distinctive functional role. They... stand ready and available to make direct impact on beliefs and/or desires. (Tye [2000]62)

A subject phenomenally appreciates something in virtue of being in an experiential state that is, in the normal run of things, a maximally proximal causal trigger for the formation of beliefs, desires, and purposive actions. Representationalists can invoke functional roles of this sort, that is, roles that involve personal-level cognitive/practical agencies, to explain experience's presentational character.

For the subject it is as if the objects are right there before him. [The representationalist] seeks to explain this aspect of experience by reference to the kind of state of mind experiencing is. According to him, it is just that state of mind which is liable to fix the subject's beliefs about how his environment must be, and hence is a state of being presented to as if things are so. (Martin [2002] 399)

It is true that our perceptual experiences are apt or poised to produce (authoritative) perceptual beliefs and influence action. But the representationalist's approach reverses the proper order of explanation. Though I do not wish to endorse its representationalist accoutrements, the spirit of the following quote goes some way toward motivating this stance.

In my view, it's not the irresistibility of our perceptual beliefs, nor the nature of our concepts, which explains why our experiences give us the immediate justification they do. Rather, it's the peculiar "phenomenal force" or way our experiences have of presenting propositions to us. Our experience represent propositions in such a way that it "feels as if" we could tell that those propositions are true—and that we're perceiving them to be true—just by virtue of having them so represented. (Pryor [2000] 547 fn. 37)

It is phenomenal presence itself that is both the source of our inclination to form beliefs on the basis of experience and the (partial) source of the warrant associated with these beliefs. The doxastic role of experience cannot be explained without adverting to experience's presentational character. But representationalism, even versions according to which the phenomenal features

of experience are *identical* to (a subset of) its representational features, must be able to explain experiential phenomenality in a manner that avoids phenomenal notions and characterizations altogether.

Approach 3: Appeal to Primitive Representational States. The representationalist can explain why experiences manifest a presentational character while other contentful states do not if experience involves a primitive and sui generis form of representation. On this approach, the distinctive manner in which an experience represents its content as obtaining is not determined by its functional role. In fact, it is not determined by anything at all. Though not himself a representationalist, Mark Johnston expresses this view when he says that, “visual experience is a sui generis propositional attitude—visually entertaining a content concerning the scene before one’s eyes” (Johnston [1992] 172–3; cf. Chalmers [2004]). According to this third approach, to be in a state in which something is phenomenally present is to represent *experientially* that something is the case. Nothing more can be said.

If correct, the representationalist would be able to explain an experience’s presentational character in terms of its representational features. But this approach deprives the representationalist’s explanatory project of its value. The invocation of a primitive and sui generis kind of representational state that is essentially presentational in one’s explanation of experience’s presentational character is no better than the invocation of a *virtus dormitiva*; it is to abandon the view that there is an independent and relatively basic level of explanation for facts about experiential phenomenality.

Though these three approaches do not exhaust representationalism’s explanatory resources, the remaining options will fare no better. For if our interpretation of transparency is correct, then it undermines any representationalist explanation of experience’s presentational character. I have argued that the phenomenological observations that ground the thesis of experiential transparency do not reveal the apparent natures of that which is present in experience or of experience itself, but disclose what is central to experience’s presentational character. This non-sensuous aspect of experiential phenomenality, namely phenomenal presence, is the manifestation of sensuous experience’s basic and intrinsic phenomenal structure. It may still be the case that experiences are essentially representational. But if the nature of experience is entirely determined by its representational features, then this class will necessarily include representations that are intrinsically and irreducibly phenomenal. That is, if representationalism is true, then it must take the form described in the third approach canvassed earlier. But if representationalism requires the introduction of primitive, presentational forms of representation, then it will be unable to provide an adequate and exhaustive explanation of experiential phenomenality.

The representationalist can retreat to the less ambitious claim of ontological supervenience. For phenomenal presence poses no threat to the thesis that

experiential phenomenality supervenes upon experience's representational features. But while relations of supervenience are often uninformative, this particular instance is exceptionally so. Phenomenal presence is not just a universal feature of sensuous experience, it is a necessary feature; one cannot appreciate a sensuous element in an experience that lacks a presentational character. So facts involving phenomenal presence are *trivially* entailed by facts involving experience's representational features. Without an adequate explanation of this supervenience relation, representationalism can say next to nothing about a ubiquitous feature of experiential phenomenality.

Perhaps the only option left is the bold recognition of representationalism's limited explanatory power:

Why then do experiences, including hallucinatory experiences, have a presentational phenomenology while thoughts do not? ... My answer to this question is that there is no answer. (Pautz [2007] 519)

5. Phenomenal Presence and Experiential Intentionality

Given our rejection of representationalism, the claim that phenomenal presence embodies an autonomous and basic form of experiential intentionality will strike many as confused. For "intentional" and "representational" are often used synonymously. I first provide a characterization of intentionality which clearly distinguishes it from representation (§5.1). I then argue that phenomenal presence satisfies this characterization (§5.2).

5.1. Intentionality

Four features are commonly associated with (non-derivative) intentionality.

(Int) Intentionality is that aspect of an occurrent, categorical state or event that consists in

- (i) its being *of, about, or directed upon* an entity [**directedness**]
- (ii) *as an exemplar or instance of some general property, relation, kind, or category* [**generality**]
- (iii) *from a particular perspective or under a particular aspect* [**aspectual shape**]
- (iv) *to or for its subject* [**personal subjectivity**]

Directedness. It is in the nature of intentionality to be directed beyond itself, beyond the individual (or a state thereof) that possess it. Intentional states that are, as a matter of fact, directed upon themselves are possible.

It is even possible, as Brentano held, that *all* intentional states are, in addition to being directed beyond themselves, self-directed. But when such cases occur, the identity that obtains between that which is intentionally directed and that upon which it is intentionally directed is entirely accidental. Such states are directed upon themselves *qua* other.

Generality. Our intentional states are not directed upon entities *simpliciter*. They are always directed upon entities as exemplars or instances of some property, relation, kind, or category that is capable, in principle, of applying to various particulars. A capacity that yields states that are intentionally directed upon entities without being directed upon them as being some general way is traditionally called *intellectual intuition* (cf. Kant [1817/1996] 28:1051). Such a capacity cannot be found this side of Heaven.

Aspectual shape. Our intentional states are always directed upon entities from a particular perspective or under a particular aspect.²³ This is easily seen in perceptual experience. Our perceptual capacities are divided into distinct sensory modalities—a single property, say, sphericity, can be experienced either visually or tactilely. Moreover, they are always exercised from a particular point of view and provide, at best, a partial and incomplete perspective on that which we perceive.²⁴

Personal subjectivity. Though it is convenient to attribute intentionality to an organism's states and events, a convenience that I have already taken advantage of, the feature's proper bearer is individual organisms. It is individual organisms inhabiting and coping with their environment that perceive, believe, judge, desire, reason, and know. To attribute an intentional *state* to an individual is to communicate indirectly that the *individual* is intentionally directed upon an entity. So if a system involved in an organism's perceptual experience is entirely modular in its output, that is, if the states it yields are neither attributable to the whole organism nor first-personally available to guide the activity or other responses of the whole organism, then these states do not possess intentionality.²⁵

Some of these conditions, especially personal subjectivity, are controversial. But if we momentarily prescind from this condition, it is clear that (Int) serves as the core of the comparatively substantive accounts of intentionality one typically encounters. I will briefly canvass the two most prevalent ways in which this minimal characterization of intentionality is developed and extended with respect to experience.

First, as we have already seen, one can provide a broadly semantical/representational account of intentionality that takes the basic other-directedness of an intentional state to consist in the possession of one or more representational

contents that determine conditions of correctness/satisfaction.²⁶ According to this conception, a state is intentional only if there are ways the world can be that render it veridical. This captures the generality of intentional directedness because such contents attribute some general property, relation, kind or category to one or more entities. Moreover, this conception can accommodate the aspectual shape of intentionality since a state's representational contents can have principles of type-individuation that are more fine-grained than the experience's satisfaction condition.²⁷

Alternatively, one can provide a relational account of intentionality that takes the basic other-directedness of an intentional state to consist in the establishment of a simple, non-representational relation between the state (or the individual whose state it is) and one or more entities that partly constitute this intentional relation.²⁸ On this conception, perceptual success does not presuppose experiential intentionality but consists in its establishment. That is, particular experiential episodes establish connections with entities and, in so doing, make them available to the perceiver as objects for attention, recognition, thought (especially singular, demonstratively expressible judgments), and purposive action. The relata upon which our experiences are intentionally directed occur as exemplars or instances of various general features and the intentional relation obtains from a particular point of view thereby satisfying the conditions of generality and aspectual shape. But standing in such an intentional relation to an entity is no more evaluable for correctness or veridicality than is standing in the relation *kicking* to a soccer ball.²⁹

So directedness upon an entity can involve the possession of representational contents and directedness upon an entity can involve the establishment of certain non-representational relations. But (Int) captures the common commitment of both views; the representational and relational accounts simply provide different analyses of this conceptually prior characterization of intentional directedness. To analyze experiential intentionality in terms of veridicality-evaluable, representational contents is merely to embrace one among the several alternatives left open by our characterization.³⁰

5.2. Experiential Intentionality

The neutrality of (Int) with respect to the various, relatively-substantive accounts of intentionality is mirrored by the neutrality of (CT) with respect to the various, relatively substantive accounts of the nature of experience's presentational character. This opens up the possibility that phenomenological reflection reveals an essentially phenomenal form of intentional directedness. But it is more than a possibility. Phenomenal presence satisfies the conditions for intentionality encapsulated in (Int): (i) The phenomenal appreciation of sensuous elements in experience is universally and intrinsically *other-directed*. (ii) The

sensuous elements one appreciates exemplify one or more appreciable general characteristics. (iii) These sensuous elements are always appreciated under an aspect; phenomenal presence affords a primitive “point of view” on that which is present. (iv) The sensuous elements we appreciate in experience are present to the self; we appreciate these sensuous elements as being both other than ourselves and as standing in opposition to ourselves. Consequently, phenomenal presence realizes a basic and non-derivative form of intentional directedness.

Several philosophers argue that experiences possess some form of phenomenal or experiential intentionality. But most of these accounts take this intentionality to consist in the possession of one or more *phenomenal contents*, that is, veridicality evaluable contents that are determined by a state’s phenomenal features. A subset of these philosophers make the stronger claim that these phenomenal contents are fully constituted by the state’s phenomenal features and cannot be reduced to its non-phenomenal features.³¹

Given the result of the previous section, namely, that the representational features of experience neither constitute nor explain phenomenal presence, it follows that accounts according to which the intentionality of experience is essentially representational are too demanding. This is the case regardless of whether these representational contents are phenomenal or not. Experiences may still possess phenomenal contents, but there is a form of phenomenal intentionality that is distinct from and prior to phenomenal representation.³² Despite these differences, the present proposal shares at least this much in common with alternative views of phenomenal intentionality: experiential phenomenality contains a basic form of intentional directedness and any attempt to provide an account of experiential intentionality that ignores phenomenality (and vice versa) cannot succeed.

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Notes

1. Prominent defenses of representationalism along these lines include Harman [1990], Tye [1995], and Byrne [2001]. The motivation for representationalism extends well beyond its alleged explanatory advantages with respect to transparency. For example,

many representationalists, especially those impressed by cognitive science's explanatory successes, argue that their account facilitates the establishment of a materialist account of the mind.

2. Four important terminological clarifications: (i) The *sensuous* elements in an experience are the most salient (and according to some the only) class of phenomenally appreciable elements in experience. This class is typically introduced by an enumeration of paradigmatic instances, say, the way the redness of a Red Delicious apple looks when one sees it, the way middle C sounds when one hears it being played on a Bösendorfer piano, and the way a pain feels when one experiences a pin pierce one's finger. Our discussion will show that the total phenomenal character of an experience can contain more than its sensuous phenomenal character; we may phenomenally appreciate more than sensuous qualities in experience. (ii) I use the expression "phenomenal appreciation" in a way that is neutral with respect to different accounts of how one comes to be aware of an experience's sensuous elements. On my own view, phenomenal appreciation places no demand on its subject beyond that of undergoing a relevant experience. To undergo an experience in which a sensuous element is present *is* to appreciate phenomenally that sensuous element. Phenomenal appreciation should therefore be distinguished from both introspection and conscious attention. But these further commitments are not required for the task at hand. (iii) I use both "element" and "entity" in a metaphysically neutral way to refer to any disjunction of object, state, event, property, and so on (context will usually make it clear which categories are relevant), with no restrictions on the natures of the referents—Meinongian objects, sense-data, abstracta, physical bodies—all count as entities/elements. For ease of expression, however, I will often simply speak of sensuous *qualities*. (iv) I take no stand on how the adjectives "public," "objective," "mind-independent," and "external" are related. (T) is stated in such a way as to cover various interpretations of these expressions.
3. (i) Though phenomenological reflection can affect the sensuous elements that one phenomenally appreciates in an experience—it can, and commonly does, increase their intensity, vividness, and resolution—such reflection, according to (T), does not effect a change in the apparent nature of the experience's appreciable elements and is not a window onto new ontological domains. (ii) Some attribute an epistemological significance to transparency, for example, the claim that one's access to the intrinsic features of one's experiences is indirect. This essay, however, is concerned primarily with transparency's metaphysical import. (iii) The rider "qua experiential subject" allows a visual experience of, say, the color of one's leg to count as transparent.
4. "Appeals to transparency appear to involve the following thought: just by *having* a perceptual experience, the perceiver is placed in a position whereby he or she is able to *classify* the ontological category of what is manifest in experience. The nature of experience is supposed to be the kind of thing that can be discerned through introspection" (Coates [2007] 157).
5. See Tye [2000] and Byrne [2001]; cf. Schroer [2007], Jackson [2007] 55, and Hill [2009] ch. 3.
6. Phenomenological reflection is not only neutral with respect to classification but is existentially silent as well. A hallucinatory experience can be subjectively indistinguishable from a veridical experience, but this phenomenological fact, *on its own*, requires neither existential profigacy—through, say, the positing of Meinongian objects or the countenancing of uninstantiated properties/universals—nor existential parsimony—through, say, the acceptance of an adverbial or disjunctive account of experience.
7. Arguments along these lines are widespread, for example, at Tye [2000] 46, 111ff. and Jackson [2007].
8. See Snowdon [1990] 136, Martin [2002], and Alston [2005]; cf. Schroer [2007] 405–7 and Smith [2008] 198–9.
9. This discussion involves a slight but unproblematic idealization. In practice, there are no absolute ganzfeld experiences. Just as the darkness we appreciate when we close our eyes includes what Helmholtz called "optical dust," that is, sundry points of light and dim patches, the experience of a ganzfeld will be subtly heterogeneous.

10. See Pylyshyn [2007] 66, Hochberg et al. [1951], and Avant [1965].
11. Some individuals report that the ganzfeld vaguely resembles a surface; they estimate that it is located less than six inches in front of them (Gibson and Waddell [1952]). But just as many find such spatial descriptions inadequate or inappropriate (Cohen [1957]). The fact that apparent distance is not a necessary aspect of a ganzfeld experience means that its phenomenality is committed to even less than that of other atypical experiences, for example after-images. For we appreciate the sensuous color in an after image as qualifying a particular distal region in our visual field: according to Emmert's law, an after-image always occupies a single visual solid angle, but the apparent linear size of the region filling that angle is directly proportional to the apparent distance of the surface onto which it is projected.
12. See Wright [1981] 589, Sorensen [2004] 462–3, and Magee and Milligan [1995] 11.
13. I suspect such experiences are nomologically possible, but metaphysical possibility is sufficient.
14. (i) A phenomenal point is not extended in the sense that one does not appreciate it as being spatially divisible. (ii) Spatially punctiliar experiences can occur in other sensory modalities. For example, if there were a creature with a single spine for a limb, and if the spine's only sensory function is to extend outward in a single direction so as to register collisions with distinct bodies, then such collisions would yield non-haptic, tactile experiences that are spatially punctiliar (cf. Smith [2002] 154).
15. Pautz [2007] 517. In particular, the possibility of spatially punctiliar experiences undermines any interpretation of transparency that requires only two-dimensional spatiality, for example, Schroer [2007].
16. Additionally (but relatedly), phenomenological reflection, by itself, places no conceptual or semantic constraints on discourse or judgment about experiential phenomenality. Most of the time, a normal perceiver undergoing an unexceptional experience will describe the sensuous qualities she appreciates as being instantiated in an objective, worldly entity. Furthermore, if she is justified in thinking that nothing is awry, she will be warranted when she judges that things are as she appreciates them to be. But we cannot accuse someone of inconsistency or misunderstanding simply because she judges, after reflecting upon the phenomenality of her experiences, that the sensuous qualities she appreciates are instantiated in one or more private, mind-dependent sense-data. If, for example, a perceiver were antecedently committed to a sense-datum account, it would not only be coherent for her to judge that a sensuous color she appreciates is an intrinsic property of an amalgam of sense-data, it would be reasonable for her to do so. It would, of course, be unreasonable for someone not antecedently committed to a sense-datum account to make such judgments. But this suggests only that the phenomenality of experience, by itself, does not epistemically privilege one set of judgments over its alternatives (cf. Gupta [2006]).
17. Experience's presentational character has long been considered a basic datum that any adequate philosophical account of perception must accommodate. From sense-datum theorists—"That this whole field of colour is presented to my consciousness... cannot possibly be doubted.... This peculiar and ultimate manner of being present to consciousness is called being given, and that which is thus present is called a datum" (Price [1932] 3)—to direct realists—"[Perceptual] experience has a kind of directness, immediacy and involuntariness which is not shared by a belief which I might have about the object in its absence. It seems therefore unnatural to describe visual experiences as representations... because of the special features of perceptual experiences I propose to call them 'presentations'" (Searle [1983] 46). See also, for example, Broad [1952], Strawson [1979] 97, Sturgeon [2000] 9, Smith [2002] 69, Martin [2002], Loar [2003] 82, Alston [2005] 255, Johnston [2007] 233, Burge [2007] 403–14, Pautz [2007], and McDowell [2008] 8.
18. It may help those familiar with Frege's philosophy of logic to note that this account of experiences as phenomenally articulate unities with a structure describable in terms of the distinction between *self* and *other* resembles, in several important respects, Frege's account of thoughts as logically articulate unities with a structure describable in terms

- of the categorial distinction between *object* and *concept* (Frege [1892/1997]; cf. Geach [1976], Diamond [1984], and fn. 20). The distinction between *object* and *concept* does not effect an ontological division of entities into kinds; the distinction captures thought's logical articulation—an articulation which cannot be expressed in thought but is reflected in the syntactic segmentation of a properly constructed language's well-formed formulas. Similarly, the distinction between *self* and *other* does not divide the world into two kinds; the distinction captures experience's phenomenal articulation—an articulation which cannot be expressed by an experiential content but is phenomenally manifest in sensuous experience. "Self" and "other" signify, as it were, *phenomenal categories*.
19. The phenomenal self needn't be an attenuated Cartesian Ego or a merely formal transcendental subject. It is, as far as ontology is concerned, an aspect of the temporally extended life of a personal self.
 20. The parallels between the current proposal and Frege's account of thought's logical structure (cf. fn. 18) are especially strong on this point. According to Frege, we cannot truthfully (or sensibly) say of a concept that it is a concept; any attempt to make a singular claim about a concept will invariably result in a claim about an object. For "the three words 'the concept *horse*' do designate an object, but on that very account they do not designate a concept" (Frege [1892/1997] 184). According to the view I am elucidating, we cannot appreciate the phenomenal self (or the states/modes thereof) as such; any attempt to appreciate the self as such will invariably result in the appreciation of a sensuous element as other. For we can appreciate sensuous elements in experience, but on that very account they are not features of the phenomenal self.
 21. An example: the colors one appreciates in a typical visual experience are phenomenally rich. That is, the shades are absolutely determinate and assessments of their relative similarity yield a dense ordering. The representationalist can explain this aspect of visual phenomenality by attributing a non-discursive or analog content to the experience upon which sensuous colors supervene. The representational structure of such contents is isomorphic to the phenomenal structure of the similarity orderings and can thereby explain the latter's manifestation.
 22. This challenge is similar to that posed by the alleged possibility of *absent qualia*. The representationalist must be able to explain, insists the proponent of absent qualia, why it isn't possible for there to be functional and representational duplicates of sentient creatures that lack phenomenal consciousness. The present challenge does not focus on qualia themselves but on the phenomenally appreciable presence of such qualia. I believe that this reorientation avoids many of the problems associated with the hypothesis of absent qualia and other challenges that fall under the heading of "The Explanatory Gap" while simultaneously capturing what is central to the dissatisfaction of those who issue such challenges.
 23. Searle introduces the expression "aspectual shape" to refer to this feature of intentionality at Searle [1992] 155ff.
 24. This latter aspect of experiential intentionality's perspectival nature involves more than there being features of perceived entities that are not themselves perceived, for example a visual experience of an opaque object doesn't reveal its every side but only its facing surface. It also involves there being a perspective on the objects, properties, and relations we do perceive. The contextual parameters that contribute to the perspectival, aspectual shape of perceptual experience are legion. For example, a single perceived shape can appear differently as we move in relation to it and the appearance of a single perceived color will vary if subjected to differential illumination or if surrounded by objects with contrasting colors.
 25. The condition of personal subjectivity is intimately related to the restriction of non-derivative intentionality to occurrent, categorical states. Any intentionality we attribute to a dispositional state will be, at best, proleptically parasitic on the intentional directedness of its (perhaps merely possible) categorical manifestations (cf. Strawson [2005]). Millikan, among others, argues that an intentional state "must be one that functions as a sign or representation *for the system itself*" (Millikan [1989] 284). But Millikan's

- account of “being for” encompasses dispositional, sub-personal phenomena and should thereby be distinguished from our notion of personal subjectivity.
26. This account is often associated with conceptions of intentionality that focus on state ascriptions rather than states themselves. On these conceptions a state is intentional if and only if its ascription is susceptible to failures of (i) existential generalization and (ii) truth-preserving substitutions of extensionally equivalent expressions. Though the association of these sorts of expression with a state is often a good indication that the state possesses intentionality, such ascriptions are neither necessary nor sufficient for intentionality.
 27. This is easily done if one attributes *Fregean contents*—structured complexes of modes of presentation—to experiences. But one can also capture experience’s aspectual shape by invoking *Russellian contents*—structured complexes of objects, properties, and relations—that comprise appearance properties, that is, finely-individuated properties that reflect a subject’s perspective, rather than (or in addition to) properties *simpliciter*.
 28. See Alston [1999], Brewer [2006], Campbell [2002], Johnston [2006], Martin [2002], and Travis [2004].
 29. (i) On many representational accounts of intentionality, if one is in a representational state, then one stands in a certain relation to a proposition (or a suitable non-propositional structure). Even if these propositions are Russellian, the relation to a proposition or to the entities within it must be distinguished from the relation to entities invoked by relational accounts of intentionality. Also, one can say that the satisfaction of a contentful state’s correctness condition places one in a relation to the entities the state represents. But the relatedness to entities that veridical representation affords, unlike its counterpart in the relational account, is not constitutive of the state’s being intentionally directed (even if the content comprises object-dependent elements); cf. Crane [2006]. (ii) Some prefer to maintain the synonymy between “intentionality” and “representationality” because representational states, unlike intentional relations, can be directed upon entities that do not exist (one’s capacity to enter into intentional relations is fallible, but one cannot stand in an intentional relation to a non-existent object). Though the permissibility of directedness upon non-existent objects is a common feature of representational states, I do not think that it is definitive of intentionality.
 30. This pair does not exhaust the possible extensions of (Int). For example, on one interpretation Aristotle takes experiential intentionality to consist in one *becoming*, in one manner of being, the entity one experiences: “That which can perceive is, as we have said, potentially such as the object of perception already is actually. It is not like the object, then, when it is being affected by it, but once it has been affected it becomes like it and is such as it is” (*De Anima* II.5 418^a3–7).
 31. The motivation behind countenancing phenomenal contents is expressed well in Siewert [1998]. Examples of the stronger claim include Horgan and Tienson [2002], Loar [2003], and Kriegel [2007].
 32. Consequently, the present account can avoid many of the controversies that surround the notion of phenomenal content, for example, whether such contents are narrow or wide. Additionally, this form of intentional directedness only occurs in sensuous experiences. So the present account can remain neutral about its relationship to the intentionality of non-sensuous states.

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