

THE REFUTATION OF INTENTIONALISM¹

Daniele BERTINI

ABSTRACT: My purpose is to refute the intentionalist approach to perception. Drawing from mainstream literature, I identify a principle on which any version of intentional theory relies. My paper is a detailed attack on the truth of the principle. In the first section I will introduce terminology and will taxonomize various statements of the intentional view. In the second section I will briefly outline a sketch of the skeletal intentionalist theory that develops from the assumption of the principle alone. Then, in the third section, I will advance my reasons against this theory. In the fourth section, I will set forth an intuitive and definitive counterexample to the adequacy of the principle of intentionalism to accounting for ordinary perception. Moving from this, in the fifth section, I will provide some reasons explaining why intentionalism is condemned at being unsuccessful. Finally, in the last section of the paper, I will give my conclusions.

KEYWORDS: intentionalism, perception, direct realism, transparency, conceptualism

1. Terminology and Taxonomy

Intentionalism is the name of a wide set of theories of perception. Suppose a subject perceives something. Call ‘phenomenal character’ the way is like for the subject to undergo the perceptual experience. In other words, ‘phenomenal character’ is nothing else than the sensational component of a perception. And again: call ‘(representational) content’ the way the object of the perceptual experience seems to be to the subject of the experience. That is, ‘content’ is nothing else than the representational component of a perception (broadly speaking, *content* is what the perceptual experience is about). Now, the principle of *intentionalism* is the claim that, for any perceptual experience, *phenomenal character entirely depends on (representational) content*, i.e. *phenomenal character covaries upon (representational) content* (Byrne 2001, 204).

For example, consider the following situation. You are at your barbecue and you are grilling some vegetables. Your experience is, at least, the enjoyment of visual and olfactory sensations. In ordinary perception, you naturally believe that these sensations show you the way the vegetables appear whenever a subject experiences them as you are actually doing. That is, the enjoyment of perceptual sensations

¹ My paper is dedicated to Ginevra Zoni, my soulmate and true love of my life. By sharing my destiny with her I learned what happiness is.

conveys a (putative) representation of the actual state of the environment around the perceiver. In this case, the phenomenal character of your perception are the visual and olfactory sensations you enjoy; the content is the vegetables you experience being there so and so. Therefore, according to the principle of *intentionalism*, being aware of the visual and olfactory sensations presented to you is entirely dependent on the way the vegetables look to you: for the subject of a perceptual experience the phenomenal character of the experience *always* expresses explicit information about how the object of the experience looks like.

According to Byrne, the principal versions of intentionalism can be classified by means of two categorical oppositions (Byrne 2001, 205). First, intermodal intentionalists hold, while intramodal intentionalists deny, that the phenomenal character between perceptual modalities is determined by a difference in content (intermodal intentionalists hold, while intramodal intentionalists deny, that seeing the grilled vegetables is different from smelling the grilled vegetables, since the content of the visual sensation is different from the content of the olfactory one). Second, suppose you are very hungry while you are grilling the vegetables. Because of this, the smell rising from the barbecue causes you to enjoy a strong bodily sensation of appetite. Unrestricted intentionalists hold, while restricted intentionalists deny, that intentionalism also applies to bodily sensations like your sensation of appetite excited by the smell from the barbecue (unrestricted intentionalists hold, while restricted deny, that bodily sensations, similarly to perceptual experiences, have representational content).

Further distinctions are proposed by Tye (Tye 2009, 257 and following): intentionalism is either strong or weak and either reductive or non-reductive. Strong intentionalists hold, while weak intentionalists deny, that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience is one and the same with representational content (strong intentionalists hold, while weak intentionalists deny, that the visual and olfactory sensations you enjoy while grilling the vegetables are one and the same with the way the vegetables you are grilling seem to you). Usually, intentionalists rejecting the strong view think of the relation between phenomenal character and content in terms of supervenience (phenomenal character supervenes upon content). And again: reductive intentionalists hold, while non-reductive intentionalists deny, that the content of perceptual experiences can be spelled out either in physical or functional term (reductive intentionalists hold, while non-reductive intentionalists deny, that either the vegetables to which perception is directed are physical entities or phenomenal character is functionally associated with the vegetables causing the subject to undergo the perceptual experience). Those intentionalists rejecting the reductive view think of the relation between phenomenal character and content as

an ontologically subjective state of mind (an ontologically subjective state of mind is a state of mind whose content primarily depends on the constitution of the mind).

My purpose in this paper is to refute any version of intentionalism. For this reason I will not take into consideration cases such as intermodal or intramodal, restricted or unrestricted, strong or weak, reductive or non-reductive intentionalist theories. On the contrary, the target of my attack will be solely the principle of intentionalism: if the principle stands, a huge variety of intentionalist theories could then be true; but if the principle falls, any version of intentionalism should then result false. Therefore, that is the way I will proceed. In the first section I will briefly outline a sketch of the skeletal intentionalist theory that develops just from the assumption of the principle. Then, in the second section, I will advance my reasons against this theory. In the third section, I will set forth an intuitive and definitive counterexample to the adequacy of the principle of intentionalism to account for ordinary perception. Moving from this, in the four section, I will provide some reasons explaining why intentionalism is condemned at being unsuccessful. Finally, in the last section of the paper, I will give my conclusions.

2. Skeletal Intentionalist Theory

According to the current usage, I introduce the following symbols. Let:

S	stand for	Subject;
PE	stand for	Perceptual Experience;
PC	stand for	Phenomenal Character;
C	stand for	(Representational) Content.

Again, let:

PI	stand for	Principle of Intentionalism;
----	-----------	------------------------------

Then, I define PI according to Byrne's and Tye's approaches to intentionalism and the relevant distinctions on the different kinds of it (Byrne 2001, 204-206; Tye 2009, 257-260):

PI _{=def}	whenever S enjoys PE, PC entirely co-varies upon C
--------------------	--

Since the different versions of intentional theories flow from the qualification of terms occurring in the definition of PI, there is no need to introduce any specifically detailed characterization for PE, PC and C in sketching the skeletal intentionalist theory I am now addressing. Indeed, intentionalists debate about how PE, PC and C should be construed within the horizon of intentionalism; nonetheless, they all agree that what really matters in the intentional approach to perceptual

experiences is the assumption of the basic claim on the relationship of phenomenal character and content.

There are two main arguments which support the assumption of PI. The first one is usually called *the argument from what seems to be for the subject*, the second one is *the argument from transparency*. Typical versions of these arguments are to be found, for the former, in Byrne (2001, 206-217); for the latter in Byrne (2009, 431-451) and Tye (2009, 260-263).

Let's begin with the first one. Byrne moves from the uncontroversial and common-sense intuition that a subject enjoying two succeeding different perceptual experiences is able to detect a difference among these, if the subject is able to realize that the phenomenal character of the first experience is different from the phenomenal character of the second one. That is, suppose that:

- 1)S enjoys PE₁ at time t^n ;
- 2)S enjoys PE₂ at time t^{n+1} ;
- 3)PE₁ and PE₂ are different.

And again, assume the general definition for PC and C:

- 4)PC_{=def} For any S enjoying PE, PC is the way it is like for S to undergo PE;
- 5)C_{=def} For any S enjoying PE, C is what PE is about.

From (1), (2), (4), and (5), it follows that:

- 6)S enjoys PC₁ at time t^n ;
- 7)S enjoys PC₂ at time t^{n+1} ;
- 8)S enjoys C₁ at time t^n ;
- 9)S enjoys C₂ at time t^{n+1} .

Now, add the clause *that the subject is ideally competent concerning their perceptual experience*, i.e. the subject's memory is perfect; memory is completely at their disposal and they are able to compare each detail of two different perceptual experiences. If this is the case, given (3), it results that:

- 10)S detects differences between PE₁ and PE₂.

At this moment the intentional theorist asks about *what these differences consist in*. The answer appears quite simple: the difference between PE₁ and PE₂ is to be found out by assessing the difference between what it is like for the subject to undergo PE₁ and what it is like for the subject to undergo PE₂. Therefore:

- 11)If S detects differences between PE₁ and PE₂, then S realizes that PC₁ and PC₂ are different.

Now, from the conjunction “(10) & (11)” it results that:

12)S realizes that PC_1 and PC_2 are different.

The intentionalist claims it is easy to see that “the subject can only discover the phenomenal character of their experience by attending to the world (whether external or internal) as their experience represents it” (Byrne 2001, 211); that is, *being aware of what it is like to undergo a perceptual experience is being aware of what the perception represents*. Consequently:

13)If S realizes that PC_1 and PC_2 are different, then S realizes that C_1 and C_2 are different;

From the conjunction “(12) & (13)”, it follows:

14)S realizes that C_1 and C_2 are different.

Therefore, here is the conclusion of the argument:

15)For any S, if S enjoys PE_1 at time t^n and PE_2 at time t^{n+1} , and S is aware that PE_1 and PE_2 are different; then S is aware that PC_1 and PC_2 are different *because* S is aware that C_1 and C_2 are different.

Now, a concise way to state (15) is to say that:

16)For any ideally competent subject enjoying a perceptual experience, phenomenal character entirely co-varies upon content.

As Byrne advocates, from (16) to the assumption of PI there is just a short step. Consider the difference between the idealized and the real subject. The former is able to verify what kind of relationship obtains between phenomenal character and content by the comparison of two or more perceptual experiences it once enjoyed (or by the comparison of any past perceptual experience with the present one). However, on the other hand, the second can perform the test just with those materials actually kept in their (long term) memory (or with one of these and the present perceptual experience they enjoy). Nonetheless, whenever the real subject performs the test concerning the relationship between phenomenal character and content, according to the limited number of real experiences they are actually able to compare, they behave exactly as the idealized subject does. That is to say, idealized and real subjects have the same kind of perceptual experiences, although the set of experiences at the disposal of the idealized subject in order to perform the test is extensionally wider than the ones at the disposal of the real subject. Now, if Byrne is right when claiming the intensional identity of idealized and real subjects, the clause *ideally competent* in (16) can be removed. Consequently, the argument for (16) becomes an argument for PI.

Having completed the exposition of *the argument from what seems to the subject*, I move on to *the argument from transparency*. Consider the following situation: imagine you are playing for the first time *touch rugby* with some friends in the park. During a pause one of them asks you: “Do you like this game?”. You answer: “Playing touch rugby is a nice experience” (P₁). What you mean is that all which occurs to a person (like you) playing touch rugby is funny and amusing. That is, by stating that (P₁) is the case, you aim at emphasizing your positive enjoyment of the given activity. Suppose that another friend sees you playing while they are walking through the park. Since they have never known anything about your interest in rugby, they are amazed by what they see, so that they approach your group. “Hey what are you doing?”, they ask you. While your answer should ordinarily sound something like “I’m playing touch rugby” (P₂), assume that your answer actually is “I’m experiencing to play touch rugby” (P₃).

The intentional theorist introduces the notion of *transparency* in order to account for the different usage of the notion of *experience* in (P₁) and (P₃). That is, when you assert the first sentence your intention is to communicate that you like what happens to you while playing, i.e. you want to refer to the sensations, the emotions, the feelings, the desires and the ends that *you (or someone like you)* actually enjoy performing a given kind of activity. Therefore, the reference to the *experience* appears perfectly reasonable. On the contrary, (P₃) is evidently redundant: the sentence simply states a matter of fact about what you are actually doing, i.e. the sentence simply provides information to your interlocutor concerning your actual way of being practically engaged in the performance of an activity. Consequently, the reference to the *experience* appears here completely useless: saying *that you are experiencing to perform a given activity* is to say *that you are performing a given activity*, because the propositional content of (P₂) and (P₃) is one and the same.

Now, both Byrne and Tye rely on the Hintonian assumption that verbs expressing perceptual experiences behave exactly as the verb *playing* does in (P₁), (P₂), and (P₃) (Hinton 1967, 1-13). Seeing, hearing, tasting and liking are not experiences, according to the meaning of the term in (P₁). *Experiencing to see* or *seeing* have exactly the same content (unless you want to put your emphasis on what occurs to *you* while seeing). Try as much as you like—the intentional theorist proposes—to consider yourself while perceiving something: you will not perceive or misperceive anything more than properties, shapes, colours and so on, that is, the phenomenal features the environment around you apparently exhibits (Byrne 2009, 433-435; Tye 2009, 261). Hence, the moral of the story is *that you are not able to detect differences between phenomenal character and content*: what it is like for

you to undergo a perceptual experience represents to you how the environment around you appears.

As Tye writes:

Suppose that you have just entered a friend's country house for the first time and you are standing in the living room, looking out at a courtyard filled with flowers. It seems to you that the room is open, that you can walk straight out into the courtyard. You try to do so and, alas, you bang hard into a sheet of glass, which extends from ceiling to floor and separates the courtyard from the room. You bang into the glass because you do not see it. You are not aware of it; nor are you aware of any of its qualities. No matter how hard you peer, you cannot discern the glass. It is transparent to you... If your friend tells you that there are several ceiling-to-floor sheets of glass in the house and that they all produce a subtle change in the light passing through them so that things seen the other side appear more vividly coloured than is usually the case, as you walk gingerly into the next room, you may become aware that there is another partitioning sheet of glass before you by being aware of the qualities that appear to belong to non-glass surfaces before your eyes... Visual experiences, according to the representationalist, are like such sheets of glass. Peer as hard as you like via introspection, focus your attention in any way you please, and you will only come across surfaces, volumes, films and their apparent qualities. Visual experiences thus are transparent to their subjects. (Tye 2009, 261)

In the light of these considerations, the intentionalist assumes the following claim:

1)When S enjoys PE, S does not enjoy an experience (according to the meaning of *experience* in (P₁)).

Hence the argument runs as follows:

2)If (1) is the case, then PC seems to be a presentation of the phenomenal features the environment around S exhibits to S;

Since "(1) & (2)" is the case, it results that:

3)PC seems to be a presentation of the phenomenal features the environment around S exhibits to S.

Now:

4)If (3) is the case, when S enjoys PE, S is aware of C via PC.

From "(3) & (4)" it follows that:

5)When S enjoys PE, S is aware of C *via* PC.

That is, the enjoyment of PC by S always conveys the enjoyment of C by S: S cannot be aware of PC without being aware of C. Consequently:

6) When S enjoys PE, PC entirely co-varies upon C.

Having concluded the deduction of PI, at this point *the argument from transparency* ends.

Equipped with two (apparently independent) arguments, the intentional theorist can happily move on to the construal of the skeletal version of intentionalism². In order to pursue the task, the intentionalist needs basically to determine whether the relationship between phenomenal character and content is either internal or external to perceptual experiences³.

Suppose the relation is internal. The assumption of PI would then entail that perceptual experiences are metaphysically constituted by the representational nature of phenomenal characters, representations ontologically forming the phenomenal realm. If this is the case, transparency could also be the main feature of perceptual experiences; but there would be no plausible reasons to hold that this representationality of perceptions should actually represent something. In other words, it would result impossible to claim whether or not perceptual experiences (mis)represent (the noumenal) reality.

² Theorists sometimes defend intentionalism as an inference to the best explanation for the case of illusions (and hallucinations). Since the inference relies on the assumption of the 'no experience hypothesis' (the claim that perceptions are not experiences), the inference is not independent from *the argument from transparency*. Consequently, I see no evident reasons for treating the inference as a third autonomous argument for intentionalism.

³ Here is a way to derive the different kinds of intentional theories from the definition of PI:

Intermodal/intramodal. Suppose you consider the possibility that phenomenal character involves sensations from different perceptual modalities; then, if you are positive to the intuition that sensations from different sense modalities have different content, you will fall into the intermodal side, if you are not, you will fall into the intramodal side.

Unrestricted/restricted. Suppose you consider the possibility that a particular class of perceptual experiences is constituted by bodily sensations; then, if you are positive to this possibility, you will fall into the unrestricted side, if you are not into the restricted one.

Strong/weak. Suppose you consider the possibility that PC and C stand in a relationship of either identity or supervenience; then, if you are positive to the possibility that the relationship among them is a relation of identity, you will fall into the strong side; if you are positive to the possibility that the relationship among them is a relation of supervenience, you will fall into the weak side.

Reductive/unreductive. Suppose you consider the possibility that either contents are physical entities or that phenomenal characters are functionally associated to the physical entities causing the subject to enjoy its perceptual experience; then, if you are positive to this possibility you will fall into the reductive side, if you are not, into the unreductive one.

On the contrary, suppose the relation is external. Perceptual experiences would not be then metaphysically constituted by the representational nature of phenomenal character: representationality would result in an acquired feature of phenomenality. Consequently, transparency should involve that the enjoyment of the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences is a case of direct acquaintance with the environment around the perceiving subject.

Given these two possibilities to determine the relationship between phenomenal character and content, it seems there would be room for two alternative options in construing intentionalism:

- PI captures the frame of PE independently on the issue of what the representationality of C *via* PC represents;
- PI captures the frame of PE, C *via* PC ordinary representing the environment around S.

The first stance is the minority view among intentional theorists; the second one is the majority view. I name the former *undeterminate skeletal intentionalism* (USI), the latter *determinate skeletal intentionalism* (DSI). USI refuses to qualify what contents represent: this position simply describes the phenomenology of perceptual experiences. According to these intentional theorists, while perceptual experiences have to be characterized by the way their contents relate to phenomenal characters, in order to explain phenomenally how perception works it is not necessary to refer to what contents actually represent.

On the contrary, the latter stance is peculiar to the great majority of intentional theorists: they hold that contents (in case of veridical perceptions) are propositional representations of the environment around the subjects enjoying perceptual experiences. Consequently, the doctrine claims that any (veridical) perception is a case of direct awareness of the objective world. How could this happen? The answer is the following: the subject grasps cognitively what the enjoyment of a given phenomenal character represents by simply enjoying the given phenomenal character.

Because of their different interpretation of PI, DSI and USI, theorists disagree on the nature of perceptual experiences. Those theorists assenting to DSI explicitly, claim that holding PI commits them to the assumption of (at least) two main consequences. They say: since perceptual experiences are transparent, the subject is not able to detect any differences between their perceiving something and their focusing on their perceiving something. Then, perceptual experiences are not cases of direct acquaintance with mental particulars and they do not have properties. Therefore, DSI allegedly entails that:

Daniele Bertini

a)perceptual experiences are not cases of direct acquaintance with mental particulars as sense data;

b)perceptual experiences do not have properties.

Finally, from PI, (a), and (b) it follows that:

c)perceptual experiences are not inner states of mind;

d)perceptual experiences are direct awareness of the environment around the perceiving subject.

Conversely, those theorists assenting to indeterminate USI hold that PI is not a reason which supports the assumption of (a) and (b). After all, the claim *that perceptual experiences are transparent to the subjects undergoing them* does not imply *that perceptual experiences actually are what subjects hold they are*. Consequently, according to the USI theorist (a) and (b) are not to be assumed as justified claims of the doctrine. The moral of the story is then the following: while the phenomenological analysis of perceptual experiences provides reason in support of PI, both (a) and (b) cannot count as evidence that contents actually represent the world, nor as reasons in support of (c) and (d) (Byrne 2001, 224-225).

3. Arguments against Undeterminate and Determinate Skeletal Intentionalism

Since I distinguish between USI and DSI, I develop my considerations against intentionalism into two separate refutations, because different general problems arise addressing USI and DSI.

As to the first case, the problems are mainly due to the propositional ambiguity which stems from the assumption *that the relationship between phenomenal character and content is ontologically undetermined*. That is, the indeterminacy of this version of the theory makes it appearing unable to state something important and insightful concerning perceptual experiences.

As to the second case, while DSI explicitly expresses strong claims (so that the theory provides a substantive and definite account of perceptual experiences), DSI endorses contradictory claims: it is easy to conclude that it should be problematic to hold it too (on pain of assuming a dialetheist account for contradictions).

In light of these considerations, I move on now to my first target. As any other intentional theorist, those assuming the USI interpretation of PI claim that the phenomenological analysis of perceptual experiences suggests that any perceptual experience looks like a case of direct acquaintance with the environment. Indeed, the phenomenology of perceptual experiences shows that nothing changes when the subject focuses at first on the phenomenal character of the perception they are enjoying and successively on themselves enjoying that phenomenal character. That

is, the phenomenal characters of both the perceptual experiences suggest to the subject exactly the same content: in the former and the latter cases it seems to them that the perceptual experiences represent the environment. Nonetheless, the USI theorist does not draw from this evidence the conclusion that contents propositionally grasp the way the environment around the subject actually is: the evidence simply attests *that enjoying a phenomenal character is constantly associated with a simultaneous understanding of this enjoyment in terms of the phenomenal features the environment apparently exhibits.*

Since the subject cannot be certain that what appears to them is actually one and the same with what really is, the subject cannot count perceptual pieces of evidence as reasons for the justification of perceptual beliefs. That is, suppose you enjoy a perceptual experience. If this is the case you are sensory modified. For example, you see a round and bulgy red coloured shape. The USI theorist claims that you cannot avoid understanding that shape as the representation of a red tomato. Nonetheless, you are not justified in taking for granted the belief that in the environment around you there is a red tomato. That is, USI states that while perceptions necessary incline the subject to form perceptual beliefs (whose propositional content is one and the same with the representational content of the perception), perceptions cannot provide reasons for true and justified beliefs.

A different way to consider all this is to say that according to the USI theorist, from the assumption of PI, three main consequences can follow:

- e)solely on the basis of the enjoyment of a perceptual experience, any subject acquires necessary doxastic commitments;
- f) solely on the basis of the enjoyment of a perceptual experience, any subject does not necessary acquire epistemic commitments;
- g)solely on the basis of the phenomenological analysis of perceptions, there is no transition from doxastic to epistemic commitments.

The problem of USI is exactly the claim that “PI & (e) & (f) & (g)” is the case. Here are the reasons why the conjunction sounds so unpalatable to me. The USI theorist assumes PI with the clause that *PI captures the frame of PE independently on the issue of what the representationality of C via PC represents.* Consequently, let:

P stand for Determined Perceptual Belief.

It results that:

- 1)If (e) is the case, then when S enjoys “PC & C”, S is forced to hold that P is the case;

Daniele Bertini

2)S is forced to hold that P is the case;

3)If (f) is the case, then when S enjoys “PC & C”, S is not forced to hold that P is justified;

4)S is not forced to hold that P is justified;

5)If (g) is the case, then when S enjoys “PC & C”, S cannot provide reasons in support of P;

6)S cannot provide reasons in support of P.

Now, from (2) and (4) it follows that:

7)S is forced to hold that P is the case and S is not forced to hold that P is justified.

And again, from (6) and (7):

8)S is forced to hold that P is the case and S is forced to prevent itself from judging on the justification of P.

At this point, consider the meaning of (8). If the USI theorist is right, any subject enjoying a perceptual experience should refrain from characterizing positively what the content of their perceptual experience actually is. Therefore, it could be the case that:

h) Phenomenal characters are either mental objects or representations of the environment around the perceiving subject, but not both;

i) Perceptual experiences either have or don't have phenomenal properties;

j) Contents are either subjective awareness of inner states of mind or objective awareness of the environment around the perceiving subject, but not both.

Let the symbol:

\oplus stand for Either ... Or, But Not Both.

Evidently:

9)If “(h) & (i) & (j)” is the case, then “[(a) & (b)] \oplus [\neg (a) \oplus \neg (b)]”

Conclusion follows:

k) “[(a) & (b)] \oplus [\neg (a) \oplus \neg (b)]”.

At this point it is easy to see that USI results compatible with (at least) three alternative notions of the representationality of contents⁴. Consider the common philosophical views on perception:

⁴ Byrne seems to consider this as a positive feature of intentionalism. He writes (Byrne 2001, 204): “Intentionalism is in a sense a weak doctrine. It is neutral on the question of what our perceptual

SENSE DATA (SD) When S ordinarily undergoes PE, the enjoyment of “PC & C” is S’s awareness of the mental objects that the environment around S causes to appear in S’s mind;

ADVERBIALISM (AD) When S ordinarily undergoes PE, the enjoyment of “PC & C” is S’s awareness of the perceptual experience’s properties that the environment around S causes to appear in S’s mind;

DIRECT REALISM (DR) When S ordinarily undergoes PE, the enjoyment of “PC & C” is S’s awareness of the phenomenal features that the environment around their exhibits.

Because of the ontological indeterminacy of the USI theorist’s notion of content, PI and its consequences can be developed into a sense data theory, an adverbialist theory, and a direct realist theory. That is, PI and its consequences are reasons in support of one of three different views on perception, because three possible situations occur. Suppose that the first disjunct in (k) is true. If this is the case, USI involves DR. On the contrary, suppose that the second disjunct in (k) is true. Then, if (a) is false, USI involves SD; if (b) is false, USI involves AD.

Notoriously, AD opposes SD in claiming that perceptual experiences are not awareness of mental objects, while DR opposes both SD and AD in claiming that perceptual experiences are not awareness of mental states. Therefore, each of these theories competes against the others to be the most adequate account for perception.

Can AD be considered simply an improvement of SD? And can DR be considered simply the definitive upgrade of AD? Evidently not. The AD theorist usually advances their arguments against the assumption that perceptual experiences are awareness of mental objects: they basically reject the SD core idea that perception is objectival in nature. And again, the DR theorist commonly attacks both

experiences are about. It does not take a stand on whether phenomenal character can be *explained in terms of, or reduce to*, intentionality—at least it doesn’t if these claims don’t follow from the mere fact of supervenience. And intentionalism is silent on physicalism, functionalism, psychosemantics, and other topics relevant to *naturalizing the mind*. He substantially advances the idea that, intentionalism being a kind of propositionalism, namely, the view that perceptual experiences have propositional content, intentionalism is compatible with any theory assenting to propositionalism, independently on which type of propositionalism is to be meant here (Byrne 2001, 225, footnote). In this regards, while he grants that intentional theorists usually argue against sense data theorists (and adverbialists too, I add), he claims that the two theories are two different versions of propositionalism, since intentionalism would be *environmental propositionalism* (the content of perception exclusively concerns the perceiver’s environment) whereas sense data theory would be *subjectivist propositionalism* (the content of perception exclusively concerns the perceiver’s inner state of mind). I hope to offer enough reasons to reject Byrne’s positive attitude to intentionalism as a general pattern accounting for the differences among these theories of perception.

Daniele Bertini

SD and AD as subjectivist doctrines: they basically reject the SD and AD core idea that perception is nothing more than phenomenal awareness. Does the truth of one of these theories exclude then the truth of the others too? Certainly yes. If the subject is aware of mental objects in perceiving, they could not then be simply aware of properties (of their experience). And again, if the subject is simply aware of properties (of their experience), they could not then be aware of the real environment around them.

Now, my claim is that if USI can be developed into one or the other of three alternative and concurrent views, in the absence of binding reasons to work out the theory towards one of them, each of the three views is to be considered a possible consequence of the assumption of PI. Then, PI appears substantially useless and uninteresting from a philosophical standpoint: three theories assenting to the same principle and basically differing among them are not evidently ruled by the assumption of the shared principle.

In order to prove my claim, consider the architecture of USI:

- I) PI.
- II) $PI \supset (e)$.
- III) $PI \supset (f)$.
- IV) $PI \supset (g)$.
- V) $PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g)$.
- VI) $[PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g)] \supset (h)$.
- VII) $[PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g)] \supset (i)$.
- VIII) $[PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g)] \supset (j)$.
- IX) $PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g) \& (h) \& (i) \& (j)$.
- X) $[PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g) \& (h) \& (i) \& (j)] \supset (k)$.
- XI) $PI \& (e) \& (f) \& (g) \& (h) \& (i) \& (j) \& (k)$.

It results that:

- According to USI theorists three propositions directly follow from the assumption of PI alone;
- None of these characterizes a distinct view on perception, a definite view on perception being a doctrine endorsing a combination of (a) or $\neg(a)$ but not both, (b) or $\neg(b)$ but not both;
- Nonetheless, the assumption of PI and its consequences requires that one view between SD, AD and DR is the case; because:

- (k) states that each one of SD, AD, and DR is possibly right.
- Despite the incompatibility of SD, AD and DR, the assumption of PI and its consequences does not entail contradictory claims as “(a) & ¬(a)” and “(b) & ¬(b)”, being the *either... or* formulas in (h), (i), (j) and (k) exclusive disjunctions.

Therefore, two claims are plainly made explicit by the architectural consideration of USI:

- l) PI alone cannot characterize any views on perception;
- m) SD, AD, and DR being alternative and concurrent views, differences among them cannot be dependent on their assumption of PI and its consequences.

From all this, I draw my conclusion: the architecture of USI reveals that while SD, AD, and DR possibly are consequences of the assumption of PI, none of these are an evident consequence of that assumption. That is, none of SD, AD, and DR are incompatible with the assumption of PI, although PI alone cannot provide reasons in support of one or the others. But, SD, AD and DR are incompatible among them: if one of these is the case, the others are then to be rejected. Consequently, differences between SD, AD and DR cannot be ascribed to the assumption of PI and its consequences.

Finally, my argument against the assumption of PI by USI theorists runs as follows:

- 1) If a principle is compatible with some conflicting views, then the principle says nothing on the conflict among these views;
- 2) If some conflicting views differ essentially among them just for their conflict, then these views are necessary to be characterized by the position each of these assumes on the matter at dispute;
- 3) From (1) and (2), a principle compatible with some conflicting views differing essentially among them for their conflict, cannot characterize any of these;
- 4) If a principle cannot characterize a view which possibly follows from its assumption, the principle is philosophically useless and uninteresting as regards to this view;
- 5) SD, AD and DR are conflicting views;
- 6) PI is compatible with SD, AD and DR;
- 7) From (1), (5) and (6), PI says nothing on the conflict among these;
- 8) SD, AD and DR differ essentially among them just for their conflict on the truth of a combination of (a) or ¬(a) but not both, (b) or ¬(b) but not both;
- 9) From (3), (7), and (8), PI cannot characterize none of SD, AD and DR;

10) SD, AD and DR possibly follow from the assumption of PI and its consequences;

11) From (9) and (10), PI is philosophically useless and uninteresting as regards to the theory of perception.

Having completed my refutation of USI, I turn to attack DSI. Contrary to the USI theorist, the DSI theorist holds that PI is a reason in support of the conjunction of (a), (b), (c) and (d). Indeed, according to the DSI theorist, *the appeal to transparency* and *the appeal to what seems to a subject* justify the subject in considering true the perceptual belief that the (veridical) perceptual experience they are actually enjoying forces them to form.

Since DSI assumes the conjunction of (a), (b), (c) and (d), DSI opposes both SD and AD. Particularly, the assumption of (a) implies the rejection of the main claim of SD, whereas the assumption of (b) implies the rejection of the main claim of AD.

What is wrong with these views? They hold perceptions to be awareness of purely subjective states of mind—the DSI theorist claims. That is, both SD and AD entail that the subject does not directly perceive the environment around them, being *sense data* or the *perceptual ways of experiencing* mental particulars. Now, while the SD and the AD theorist disagree on the nature of these mental particulars (objects *vs* properties), both SD and AD claim that when the subject enjoys a perceptual experience, the subject is directly aware solely of those mental particulars that the environment around them causes to appear in their mind. Therefore, DSI opposes those views of perception holding *that perceptual experiences are something like presentations of pictures viewed by the subject's inner eye*: according to the DSI theorist, SD and AD should then be rejected because they hypostatize (namely, they ascribe substantial and independent existence to) perceptual experiences.

The problem here concerns the kind of relation perception is (or is not) thought to be: the phenomenological analysis of perceptual experience by SD and AD theorists leads to the claim that when the mind perceives something, the mind is indirectly related to the environment by means of its experience. That is, the mind is somehow in front of its experience as something distinct from both itself and the environment: perceptual experiences interpose between the mind and the world. As a consequence, perception is meant to be an ontologically ternary relation (the mind is in relation to its perceptual experience, which is in relation to the environment causing it). On the contrary, the phenomenological analysis of perceptual experiences by DSI suggests to the theorist that when the mind perceives something, the mind is directly related to the environment, its experience being the direct representation of the environment. That is, the phenomenal features it is presented with by its enjoyment of the phenomenal character of its perceptual experience are

the direct appearances of the properties the environment around itself intrinsically possesses. As a consequence, perception is meant to be an ontologically binary relation (the mind is in relation to the environment).

In light of these considerations, DSI evidently appears as a version of DR: “intentional theories [...] assert that mind-independent objects can be presented to the mind in having perceptual experiences” (Martin 2002, 392). Particularly, DSI *is* the contemporary mainstream version of DR: the reduction of phenomenal character to content is the reduction of the phenomenal to the noumenal, i.e., *the way the perceived object ordinarily appears to the perceiving subject is the way the object actually is*. In the intentionalist jargon: what is for me to undergo a perceptual experience directly represents the appearance of the environment around me. Consequently, the reduction of phenomenal character to content is equivalent to saying that I necessarily enjoy a perception understanding my sensory modifications as the informational presentation of reality.

The DSI theorist claims that (c) and (d) clearly express these stances of intentionalism. Nonetheless, something goes wrong with the alleged direct realist flavour of DSI. Consider the following situation (Sit₁)⁵:

- S₁ enjoys PE₁;
- S₁ is provided with a visual sensory modification presenting a round and bulgy red coloured shape in front of them;
- PC₁ conveys C₁ to S₁;
- S₁ is then aware that a tomato is in front of them;
- S₂ enjoys PE₂ (from S₁'s standpoint S₂ looks at the same region of the environment as S₁ does);
- S₂ is provided with a visual sensory modification presenting an oval and bulgy yellow coloured shape in front of them;
- PC₂ conveys C₂ to S₂;
- S₂ is then aware that a lemon is in front of them.

Suppose S₁ states to S₂ that they hold the belief that the object in front of them is a tomato. Naturally, S₂ replies immediately to S₁ that their belief is false: the object in front of them is a lemon indeed. As a consequence, S₁ and S₂ begin to quarrel about the nature of the object they think to perceive. Because of this, they ask a friend to testify whether the object is a tomato or a lemon. Then, S₃ performs the test and confirm S₂'s belief that the object in front of them is a lemon. At this point S₁

⁵ Capital letters with subscript numbers represent different particulars.

Daniele Bertini

confesses that short time before enjoying the perceptual experience, they have swallowed a psychopharmacological drug able to induce strong hallucinations. Therefore, they all agree to repeat the perceptual experience the day after when the effects of the psychopharmacological drug would be completely vanished. Finally, this new situation (Sit₂) results:

- S₁ enjoys PE₃;
- S₁ is provided with a visual sensory modification presenting an oval and bulgy yellow coloured shape in front of them;
- PC₃ conveys C₂ to S₁;
- S₁ is then aware that a lemon is in front of them;
- S₂ enjoys PE₄;
- S₂ is provided with a visual sensory modification presenting an oval and bulgy yellow coloured shape in front of them;
- PC₄ conveys C₂ to S₂;
- S₂ is then aware that a lemon is in front of them.

Now, does the difference between Sit₁ and Sit₂ constitute a problem for DSI? In a way, it should. After all, DR being true, it seems reasonable to think that the sensational component of a perception should not be fallible: directly perceiving the environment around me seems to imply that the sensory component of my perception is a veridical presentation of its appearance to me. Then, I cannot be in error here. Nonetheless, according to the DSI theorist, the answer should be *no*, because DSI is ready to construe perceptual experiences in terms of the success or failure of the representative process (Brewer 2006). That is, if the representative process is successful, then the perceptual experience has a veridical content; if it is unsuccessful, it has a non-veridical one. Consequently, DSI claims that when a subject enjoys a perceptual experience, content either represents or misrepresents the environment around them (when a subject enjoys a perceptual experience, content ordinarily represents the environment around them, being illusion and hallucination cases of misrepresentation).

Byrne pictures this feature of DSI contrasting the treatment of the relationship between phenomenal character and content by SD and AD with that of DSI. SD and AD hold, while DSI denies, that phenomenal characters are infallible and incorrigible, the understanding of content being a matter of judgement (Byrne 2009, 435-438).

What does this mean? That according to the DSI theorist, when S₁ experiences Sit₁, S₁ sees a tomato because PE₁ presents to their the non-veridical PC₁; on the

contrary, when S_1 experiences $Sitz_2$, S_1 sees a lemon because PE_3 presents to them the veridical PC_3 .

As a conclusion it results that DSI holds that when a subject enjoys a perceptual experience, then the environment around their either veridically or non-veridically appears within the phenomenal character they are provided with.

It seems then that some problems arise for DSI. Let:

v	stand for	Veridical;
nv	stand for Non-	Veridical;
t	stand for	True;
nt	stand for Non-	True.

I define:

PC_v For any S enjoying PE, PC_v successfully presents to S the phenomenal features the environment around them possesses;

PC_{nv} For any S enjoying PE, PC_{nv} unsuccessfully presents to S the phenomenal features the environment around them possesses;

C_t For any S enjoying PE, C_t successfully expresses to S the phenomenal features the environment around them possesses;

C_{nt} For any S enjoying PE, C_{nt} unsuccessfully expresses to S the phenomenal features the environment around them possesses;

Now, consider the following argument:

- 1)PI;
- 2)For any S enjoying PE, C *via* PC either represents or does not represent the environment around S;
- 3)S enjoys PE;
- 4)" PC_v & C_t " \oplus " PC_{nv} & C_{nt} ".

At this point, assume the following principle:

n)For any S enjoying PE, if " PC & C " either successfully or unsuccessfully *presents and expresses* the environment around S, then " PC & C " is not the direct presentation of the environment S.

To the best of my knowledge (n) is uncontroversially true. Consider the following lines of argumentation. The representative process the DSI theorists hold to characterize perceptual experiences ends with the presentation of " PC & C " to the subject. The possibility that " PC & C " either successfully or unsuccessfully *presents and expresses* the environment necessarily requires that " PC & C " is not the direct

awareness of the phenomenal features the environment actually possesses. Indeed, suppose that “PC_{nv} & C_{nt}” is the case: the failure of the representative process means that the subject actually enjoys a phenomenal character and a content that do not correctly represent the appearance of the environment to them. That is, the phenomenal features of the environment that the phenomenal character and the content of the perceptual experience present to the subject do not correspond to the phenomenal features the environment actually possesses. Consequently, at least for the unsuccessful cases it results that “PC & C” is not the direct presentation of the environment around the perceiving subject: the phenomenal cannot be reduced to the noumenal. But, if “PC_{nv} & C_{nt}” is not the direct presentation of the environment around the perceiving subject, *do we have reasons for thinking “PC_v & C_i” to be something like that?* Obviously not, because the successful case cannot but parallel the unsuccessful one: the success of the representative process means that the subject actually enjoys a phenomenal character and a content that do correctly represent the appearance of the environment to them. That is, the phenomenal features of the environment that the phenomenal character and the content of the perceptual experience present to the subject do correspond to the phenomenal features the environment actually possesses. Now, although in the positive case the phenomenal can be reduced to the noumenal, according to the DSI theorist’s understanding of the representative process, the phenomenal and the noumenal remain two ontologically distinct states of being, which are related: while the former is a mental particular, the second is not⁶.

Consequently:

5) If “(4) & (n)” is the case, then for any S enjoying PE, “PC & C” is not the direct presentation of the environment around S;

6) But, if “PC & C” is not the direct presentation of the environment around S, “PC & C” is the medium by means of which the environment around S is perceived by S;

7) Consequently, “PC & C” is an ontologically different state of being from the

⁶ Intentional theorists can be tempted to defend direct realist intentionalism by means of the disjunctive approach to perception. In this case they say: whenever the subject veridically perceives something, the subject is directly acquainted with the environment around them, misperception being a completely different state of mind. Nonetheless, I confess I do not understand how this is to be argued without infringing the consequences of PI. For it follows from PI that differences in phenomenal character are differences in content, whereas disjunctivism grants that two different states of mind can share their phenomenal characters and differ in content (for example, a veridical perception of a lemon and a hallucination of a lemon have the same phenomenal character and different content) (Tye 2009).

environment around S;

8) Since the environment around S is not mental in nature, “PC & C” is a mental particular state of being.

Given this argument, it results an objection to the consistency of DSI:

- 1) DSI endorses PI;
- 2) If PI is the case, then “(c) & (d)” follows;
- 3) DSI endorses (8);
- 4) ¬[“(c) & (d)” & (8)];
- 5) DSI endorses contradictory claims.

It goes without saying that a theory endorsing contradictions cannot offer any plausible view on the truth of its claims. Consequently, DSI cannot evidently provide any consistent and compelling reasons in support of its treatment of the phenomenon of perception. Since DSI is the claim that from the assumption of PI the conjunction “(a) & (b) & (c) & (d)” follows, I hold that PI should be rejected, **as** it is not possible to reject any of “(c) & (d)” and (8).

4. A Counterexample to the Principle of Intentionalism

The two refutations of USI and DSI show that the assumption of PI puts the intentional theorist into the horns of a dilemma. On one hand, they can avoid ontologically characterizing the representative nature of perceptual experiences. But all they obtain is simply a vague principle which results in no philosophical importance or usefulness in accounting for perception. On the other hand, they can ascribe positive and substantive ontological features to the representative nature of perceptual experiences. But eventually they fall into a non-removable contradiction.

I believe there is a plain reason for all this: PI is definitely false, since it makes particular features of a narrow class of perceptual experiences to be universally sound; i.e., it expresses the view that the representationality some perceptions exhibit should characterize the nature of any kind of perceptions *tout court*. In order to make explicit why intentionalism necessarily does not succeed in accounting for perception, consider the following counterexample to its main claim.

I live in a small town on the coast, at the back of which a mountain range rises. If one looks at these mountains from the sea coast, they look fascinatingly alpine. Therefore, despite the fact that my town is a sea town, many people living here do love mountains. Me too. Reaching the summits of the mountains by the old paths is quite a marvellous experience: when one walks up to the peaks through the

woods, the ruins of human settlements, the pastures, the wide mountainsides, it is possible to enjoy the view of both alpine environments and marine panoramas.

As many other mountain lovers, I have my favourite hikes. Commonly, I carry out my excursion with friends. We usually reach those paths by car, well equipped. During the excursion we chat and observe nature, we listen to natural ground sounds, we focus on birds and other animals we could possibly meet and pay attention to notable trees and so on. Sometimes, we take pictures as well or we stop for a pause near a spring to eat or drink something.

It is worth noting that trekking a known path requires a new performance of a previously enjoyed experience. Indeed, knowing a hike means knowing the path to go from the start to the end. That is, *knowing a hike* means *acknowledging the signs which point the right way to take and behaving accordingly*.

Now, leave aside the characteristic events occurring during a trekking experience of a known hike and consider solely the perceptual acknowledgement of signs. Evidently, each time a subject enjoys the experience, the environment appears different. That is, the phenomenal features the environment exhibits during an experience differ from the phenomenal features the environment exhibited in previous experiences. For example, trees change their look year after year; the elements composing the path change too (e.g., rocks change their positions and many kinds of different grasses grow interposing among them). And again, if I experience my ascent in a sunny day, things and their colours would look very different from experiencing them in a cloudy day. Moreover, in two different periods of the year the sounds I hear would possibly result very different: walking on the snow causes different sounds from walking on fallen leaves.

Naturally, there is a simple reason to account for all this: any natural place (phenomenally) changes by passing time. Consequently, experiences of the same natural places (phenomenally) differ among them.

Therefore, whenever I enjoy a trekking experience of a hike I know, the perceptual acknowledgement of signs during my trekking experience provides me with a phenomenal character that is not the same with the phenomenal characters I once enjoyed performing my previous experiences of the same hike.

If PI is true, the content of my different experiences in perceptually acknowledging signs should then differ. Nonetheless, this is evidently false: content is always the same, content being the information about the right way to take. This information is carried by the phenomenal appearance of signs; that is, the phenomenal character I enjoy when I acknowledge a sign. Consequently, perceptually acknowledging signs entails attributing identity to different

phenomenal appearances; namely, attributing the same content to different phenomenal characters.

According to me the truth of this conclusion is supported by the heuristic value of its generalization.

What is my perceptual experience about (during my trekking)? Although I competently realize that my present enjoyment of phenomenal features in perceptually acknowledging signs differs from my past enjoyments, all I am aware of (during my experience) suggests me that my present and any past experiences of the same hike concern significantly the same objects. Exactly, the same pathways, the same woods, the same ruins of human settlements, the same pastures, the same mountainsides, the same peaks; namely, the same mountains. It does not matter if many (even most) single elements constituting these entities have changed (whatever *being constituted* means for these entities): things look different, but their appearance conveys to me the same packages of information as previous instances of the same experience did.

Evidently, this counterexample suffices to reject PI: if phenomenal character entirely co-varies upon content, it is not possible that two perceptions of the same environment present the same content, the phenomenal character of the first experience being different from the one of the second. But more important, the analysis of the trekking experience clearly shows where intentionalism fails.

5. Reasons against the Principle of Intentionalism

According to me there are two main reasons in support of the claim that phenomenal character and content are not in a relationship of direct covariance. They both rely on the following idea: if phenomenal character covaries upon content, and content is representational in nature, then phenomenal character should be completely representational in nature too. But phenomenal character is not completely representational in nature. Therefore, phenomenal character does not covary upon content.

First reason in support of my claim. Phenomenal character is not completely representational as content is, because phenomenal character and content differ from an extensional standpoint. That's why: phenomenal character presents to the perceiving subject much more phenomenal features than those actually referred to in content. That is, when a subject enjoys a perception, despite the fact that they are aware of many phenomenal features the enjoyment of phenomenal character provides them with, they are actually related to a set of propositions expressing a low number of them. Consequently, phenomenal character exhibits a narrow representational role in perception, phenomenal character being representational in

nature if and only if all phenomenal features it presents to the subject are actually expressed by propositions the subject is in relation to. Suppose that while I am hiking, I find a difficult passage. At this point I look carefully for the better way to proceed observing the shape of the rocks I am in front of, in order to find the right grip. Nonetheless, I do not take into consideration any single property of these: even if I am obviously provided with the presentation of their colour, their fine texture, their smell and so on, these features do not matter to me. In fact, the package of information about the environment my perception furnishes me with is a limited part of the phenomenal character which passes from implicitness to explicitness; e.g., when my selective attention focuses on the shape of the rocks looking for the right grip, most phenomenal features I am perceiving never acquire a propositional status I am related to. That is, I am not in actual relationship with each proposition which expresses the phenomenal features presented to me by enjoying the phenomenal character of my perceptual experience.

In conclusion, two different phenomenal characters (widely differing in reason of what remains propositionally implicit) may have the same content insofar as they both suggest the same explicit information.

Naturally, the intentional theorist might be tempted to appeal to the claim that phenomenal character and content extensionally differ solely for real subjects, the difference of ideal and real subjects being a difference in degree, not in essence. Unfortunately, this assumption is definitely vague and does not answer the charge.

Consider two alternative hypotheses (which cover the range of psychological models in the theory of perception):

ENDORSEMENT OF COGNITIVISM (EC): ideal and real subjects differ in degree, not in nature, since both of them are computing machineries (at least as to the performance of cognitive tasks); where the computational skills of ideal subjects are much greater than those of real ones;

REJECTION OF COGNITIVISM (RC): ideal and real subjects differ in nature, not in degree, since ideal subjects can, while real ones cannot, run exactly the same cognitive performances of a computing machinery⁷.

Suppose EC is the case. Then, the intentionalist argues for the claim that the cognitive difference between ideal and real subjects simply consists in the fact that ideal subjects lack, while real subjects possess, psychological apparatuses conditioning the performance of cognitive tasks. Once psychological bias is left aside, real subjects parallel ideal ones. In terms of degree: the more real subjects can

⁷ Cognitive scientists, philosophers and psychologists commonly agree that *perception involves the exercise of cognitive skills* (Nicoletti & Rumiati 2006). Consequently, it is usually assumed that perceptual experiences should be included into the set of cognitive performances.

avoid their psychological apparatuses to exercise influences on their cognitive performances, the more they approximate ideal subjects.

Why would this answer not work?—the intentional theorist asks. Obviously, because even if real subjects are computing machineries differing from ideal ones just in degree, their actual performance of cognitive tasks is *always* conditioned by their psychological equipment. In terms of degree, again: since real subjects cannot really avoid their psychological apparatuses to exercise influence on their cognitive performances, the difference in degree between real and ideal subjects is so much, that the performance of cognitive tasks by real subjects cannot parallel that of the ideal ones.

In regard to this, consider how Byrne pictures ideal subjects. They should have a perfect memory, whose accessibility should be complete, so that subjects could exercise their perfect cognitive skills in comparing each detail of a present perception with past perceptions without being mistaken. Now, I strongly claim that even if real subjects possess a perfect and completely accessible memory, they could not be able to manage the materials contained in it as ideal ones can. Indeed, consider (at least) *selective attention*, *purposive behaviour* and *individual inclinations*: these features determine real subjects to acquire a propositional relation just to a selected portion of the whole phenomenal character they enjoy. Consider again my trekking experience: assume that I am ready to grant that while walking I can actually access to a perfectly complete memory. Suppose that as soon as we enter a small wood after walking many hours, we come to a fork. The step of the path preceding the wood is on a steep slope. The ascent is hard, because the steep slope is uncomfortable to overcome and too much sunny: when my friends and I reach the fork we feel tired and walk in silence. Consequently, in perceiving the environment around us we probably look just for those proper signs pointing to the adequate side of the fork to take: given each one's personal stamina, our attention focuses on these signs because our behaviour is directed to completing our hike. It does not matter how many phenomenal features my perceptual experience furnishes me with at the fork: the package of information my cognitive skills translate into propositional content just represents the side of the fork to take (although I obviously perceive many other elements in the environment). Therefore, I conclude, since I cannot avoid being (at least) selectively attentive, purposive behaving and individually endorsing inclinations in perceiving, different phenomenal characters possibly vary upon the same content⁸.

⁸ It is not by chance, I am afraid, that the most part of perceptual situations considered in literature are trivial cases of perception of simple objects. If a subject in a laboratory is asked to say whether those chips passing in front of him are red or blue, it is certainly true that the phenomenal features

However, these considerations do not express my view on the topic, because I have simply supposed that (what seems to me) the most charitable assumption for intentionalism is the case; i.e., EC is the right hypothesis for answering the extensional objection to the direct covariance of phenomenal character and content. But this is not the option I prefer: a big amount of recent scholarship in cognitive science apparently demands for a paradigm shift from cognitivism to at least one of the other two anticognitivist psychologies. Both of them challenge the claim that real subjects are computing machineries. Consequently, according to the two anticognitivist psychologies, RC is to be assumed.

From a materialist standpoint, connectionism, broadly construed, is the claim that mental states are epiphenomena caused by physical processes, each individual state depending on the actual constitution of the subject's nervous system. That is, mental states are physically embodied (they are the results of determined interactions among singularly determined neural units) and contextually situated (they are the outputs of singularly located networks of units, inputs being neural records of environmental stimuli): when a subject performs a cognitive task, each state they experience is a particular event consisting in the activation of a local network of some neural units (the activation of the local network solely occurs by physicochemical interactions) (Calabretta 2002). Consequently, no mind abstractly acts on mental contents. That is, mental contents are not to be understood as symbols, and cognitive performances are not to be understood as logical computations on symbols. Rather, mental contents are direct, empirically acquired and locally embodied vectorial interpretations over sets of neurophysical data (Edelmann 1992; Churchland 1995). Namely, while cognitivists claim that when a subject experiences a cognitive performance, the phenomenal character of their experience is translated by the subject's cognitive skills into packages of symbolic information which are to be processed by their by means of logical computation, connectionists advocate that any subject experiencing a cognitive performance simply responds to the environment around them by direct, empirically acquired and locally embodied reactions to the environmental stimuli they enjoy. Therefore, cognitivism and connectionism basically disagree on the ontology of the states of mind.

presented to them by the enjoyment of subsequent phenomenal characters incline them to hold that their perception represents *that in front of them there are passing chips, some of which are red and others blue*. Simple cases of perception provide *prima facie* evidences for PI. Nonetheless, this does not imply that this kind of perception is normative in respect to the fundamental nature of perceptual experiences. In fact, it is not: perceptions commonly are *perceptions of scenario*; and this involves that psychological bias cannot be bracketed.

Cognitivism is dualist about the relationship of mental states and brain states; i.e., the mind cannot be reduced to the brain, because the former is a software whereas the latter is a hardware (different brain states can instantiate the same mental state). On the contrary, connectionism is monist; i.e., the mind should be eliminated from the ontological analysis, because there is no software apart from the hardware, the hardware architecture directly implementing the performance of the functions usually ascribed to the software running (against cognitivists, connectionists claims that the software cannot be treated as independent on the actual constitution of the hardware) (Di Ferdinando 2002, 126-129).

As a consequence, connectionism evidently endorses RC. In particular, connectionists hold that computing machineries serially operate quickly processing (univocally established) data one-by-one, while real subjects parallelly operate slowly processing a big amount of (equivocally managed) data (Edelman 1992; Churchland 1995). Therefore, according to connectionists, the notion of an ideal subject running the same cognitive performances of a computing machinery does not make sense. Consequently, since from RC immediately follows that the extensional objection to the covariance of phenomenal character and content cannot be answered by appealing to the identity in nature of the cognitive performances of ideal and real subjects, I conclude that if connectionism is the case, the intentional theorists should search for some reasons (others from those which can be found in literature) in support of their reply to the observational evidence that two perceptual experiences possibly present different phenomenal characters and the same content⁹.

Now, the connectionist assumption of RC is not the kind of assumption I am sympathetic to. This is how I see the whole story. From a neutral towards materialism point of view, narrative psychology, broadly construed, is the claim that mental states are the results of the narrative construction of personal life and socio-psychological identity. When a subject performs a cognitive task, each state they experience is the section of a plot; because, for any subject, *cognitive performances consist in meaning understanding* and *meaning understanding is dependent on the context the subject lives in*. That is, cognitive performances are based upon the way personal experience is narratively managed and handled within the whole set of

⁹ Connectionism easily accounts for the occurrence of perceptual experiences with different phenomenal characters and the same content. Consider the subjective enjoyment of two different phenomenal characters: although the interactions among the networks of neural units generating the epiphenomenon of the enjoyment of the first phenomenal character differ from those generating the enjoyment of the second, both of them activate the same corresponding pattern of networks of neural units generating awareness of content.

(cognitive, ethical and emotive) presuppositions any subject implicitly assumes by their own being contextualized in the community life (Bruner 1992). Consequently, for any subject, cognitive performances depend on the socio-psychological narrative arrangement of experiences according to their own implicitly assumed storied worldview.

Evidently, narrative psychology opposes cognitivism. Particularly, narrative psychology rejects the claim that the action of thinking concerns logical computation on symbol. Indeed, thinking is a matter of meaning understanding, and meaning understanding is a matter of translating third person viewpoint stories into first person viewpoint stories (Schank & Abelson 1995). If this is the case, narrative psychology endorses RC. Therefore, as for the connectionist assumption of RC, the narrative psychology assumption of RC prevents the intentional theorist from answering the extensional objection to the covariance of phenomenal character and content¹⁰.

All considered, since neither of the terms of the disjunction “EC or RC” provides reasons in defence of PI from the extensional objection, I conclude that if the intentional theorist intends to vindicate their doctrine, then they should find out how it is possible that observational evidence attests that two different perceptual experiences have different phenomenal characters notwithstanding their having the same content.

Therefore, I move on to the second reason against PI. My claim is the following: phenomenal character and content differ from an ontological standpoint, since the former is non-conceptual in nature, while the latter is conceptual; representationality implying representation to be conceptual. That is, if my claim is true, from the ascription of non-conceptuality to phenomenal character and conceptuality to content, it follows that it is necessary that phenomenal character does not covary on content. Indeed, if phenomenal character is not completely representational, two different perceptual experiences may differ in phenomenal character as to their non-representational features, their representational features remaining the same; namely, content remaining the same.

¹⁰ Narrative psychology easily accounts for the occurrence of perceptual experiences with different phenomenal characters and the same content. Consider the subjective enjoyment of two different phenomenal characters: since content is the meaningful interpretation of the phenomenal features phenomenal character provides the subject with, content depends on the way the whole set of presuppositions they implicitly assume are narratively handled and managed by them. Consequently, different perceptual experiences can be interpreted in terms of the same meaning, that is different phenomenal characters can convey the same content.

I begin with the common assumption that a representation represents something if and only if this something *is acknowledged* to be a *this-such* (McDowell 1998, 453-462). For example, while experiencing my hike, I see a tree on the side of the path. My visual sensations provide me with an approximately cylindrical shape (irregularly constituted at the top), which is vertical as for spatial orientation, and brown and green as for colour. These visual sensations present to me phenomenal features trees commonly exhibit. Consequently, *this particular* arrangement of phenomenal features is understood to be a tree because it is acknowledged to be the instantiation of generic properties of trees.

That is, acknowledging that a particular arrangement of phenomenal features individuates an individual is to exercise the conceptual capacities any subject is provided with. Indeed, an individual is concretely sorted into a kind by acknowledging that it is the case that that individual *correctly* instantiates a basic set of generic proprieties (Ginsborg 2006, 360-361). In conclusion, representing implies exercising conceptual classifications.

Now, remember that the intentional theorist qualifies intentionalism as a form of propositionalism. According to their treatment of the notion, enjoying phenomenal character determines the subject of perceptual experiences to acquire a propositional attitude towards the representational content of their perceptual experiences. Seeing a tree at the side of the path involves being in relation to the proposition (*there is*) *a tree at the side of this path*. As a consequence, intentionalism claims that when a subject perceives something, being aware of the phenomenal features of the environment determines the subject to be in relation to (a set of) propositions attesting how these features actually appear. Then, according to the intentional theorist, perceiving should require that the subject actually possesses, exercises, and employs definite, substantive and complete conceptions of the environment.

But, what does conceptual precisely mean here? I grant what seems to me the most generous assumption for intentionalism, that is, a state conception of the opposition of non-conceptuality and conceptuality (Byrne 2003, 268). Namely:

NONCONCEPTUALITY=_{def} Mental state MS_{nonconc} with content C (enjoyed by S) is non-conceptual iff S being in MS_{nonconc} does not require that S actually possesses the concepts characterizing C;

CONCEPTUALITY=_{def} Mental state MS_{conc} with content C (enjoyed by S) is conceptual if S being in MS_{conc} does require that S actually possesses the concepts characterizing C;

Consequently, according to the definitions:

- for any subject enjoying a perception, if phenomenal character is a non-

conceptual state of mind, it is not necessary to exercise the conceptual capacities characterizing the content of perception in order to experience what it is like to undergo this perception;

- on the contrary, for any subject enjoying a perception, if understanding the content of perception is a conceptual state of mind, it is necessary to exercise the conceptual capacities characterizing the content of perception in order to experience what the perception is about.

That is, when a subject enjoys a perception of the environment around them, if phenomenal character is non-conceptual, it is not necessary that they experience an *actual conception* of their environment in order to (definitely, substantively, and completely) enjoy what it is like to undergo a perceptual experience of their environment. On the other hand, if content is conceptual, it is necessary that they experience an *actual conception* of their environment in order to (definitely, substantively, and completely) understand what their perception is about. As a consequence, it results that for any perceptual experience, either content is conceptually expressed (by a set of propositions) or the perceptual experience does not have content at all.

In light of these considerations, let me draw an evident conclusion: if PI is true, then phenomenal character should be a conceptual state of mind. Indeed, if phenomenal character covaries upon content, and content is representational, phenomenal character should be representational too. But *being representational* entails *being conceptual*. Therefore, phenomenal character should be conceptual.

Now, my claim that phenomenal character is not conceptual appears *prima facie* intuitively true. Consider the trekking experience: after having passed through a little wood, the path my friends and I are walking on starts ascending to the peak of the mountain through pastures and grass. I do not need exercising actual conceptions of the wood, the path, the pastures, the grass and the peak of the mountain in order to undergo what it is like to enjoy the phenomenal character of my perception. Indeed, I can walk without paying attention to the phenomenal features I am presented with, because I am strongly focused on a conversation with my friends concerning the beautiful hawk we have seen flying in the sky half an hour earlier. In this case, I am sensory modified by the environment in a way that undergoing my perceptual experience presents to me a whole of phenomenal features; but, since I am not attentive to these, it does not seem that I actually exercise my conceptual capacities in order to form conceptions of the environment. That is, enjoying phenomenal character does not appear inevitably enjoying a conceptual state of mind.

Nevertheless, the enjoyment of the phenomenal character of my perception could be attended by the understanding of the content of my perception. That is, the

particulars I come across during my trekking experience could be exactly the content of my perceptual experience. Suppose that when my friends and I proceed through the wood, the pastures, the grass, the peaks of the mountains, we all pay attention to the environment around us since we are looking for the right way to go. If this is the case, we acknowledge the wood, the pastures, the grass, the peaks of the mountains, because we all exercise our own conceptual capacities in grouping pieces of phenomenal features under perceptual patterns we recognize as presentations of the required particulars. These materials are packages of information about the environment we perceive. That is, some of the phenomenal features I am aware of fall under actual conceptions.

Naturally, the most part of what I perceive does not fall under any concept. Not even it could: what it is like to undergo a perception seems for large part unattainable to conceptuality (in reason of the world's fine texture and richness of phenomenal features) (Heck 2000, 489-499). Suppose that as soon as the ascent to the peak starts after the wood, a big beech tree becomes visible far on the pastures. I see the tree, I acknowledge it to be a tree. Moreover, I acknowledge it to be a beech tree. Evidently, I employ concepts here (I exercise actual conceptions of what I see)¹¹: TREE and BEECH TREE. Now, consider I made a category mistake concerning the identification of the tree: I see the tree, I acknowledge it to be a tree, but it seems an elm to me. Again, I employ concepts: TREE and ELM. Finally, consider a third kind of situation: I see the tree and I acknowledge it to be a tree, but I cannot acknowledge what kind of tree it is. My questions are: is my perceptual experience occurring according to the first situation different from the perceptual experience occurring according to the second? Is my perceptual experience occurring according to the third situation different from the perceptual experience occurring according to either the first or the second?

My idea is that the right answer to both questions is *that it depends on which component of perceptual experiences I focus on*. Assume that I simply take into consideration the phenomenal features the environment around me exhibits. In this case I see the visible appearance of the tree far on the pastures. It does not matter whether or not I can correctly identify if this appearance is the appearance of a tree which I do not know, the one of a beech or of an elm. I look at the appearance: all I perceive are visible phenomenal features as colours, shapes, spatial orientations, and like. I can look at these with a great degree of attention. I can scrutinize them. I can obtain a bright and clear awareness of the phenomenal features I am provided with. Carefully performing these operations on the phenomenal character of my

¹¹ Following the current usage capitalized words refer to concepts. Example: the word RED refers to 'the concept of red'.

perceptual experience does not depend on concepts possession, exercise or use. Suppose I cannot acknowledge which kind of tree the appearance presents to me. One of my friends then says it is a beech tree. I look again at the appearance: it has not changed. But I usually acknowledge beech trees. I do not agree with my friend. This tree is not a beech tree. Another friend proposes: this tree is an elm. We look again at the appearance. The tree is still there, appearance remaining the same. Consequently, when I perceive something, if I focus on my enjoyment of the phenomenal character, then the three situations I sketch seems not to differ.

On the contrary, consider a different situation. Suppose that, before departing for our hike, one of my friends have come across the information *that in sunny days an archipelago is visible from the viewpoint of the elm standing on the upper side of the path at two hours and forty-five minutes from the beginning of our trekking*. Since he would like to see the archipelago, in order to individuate the right tree, he takes with him a map where its position is marked. Consequently, at the right time we all consult the map and look for the tree by projecting the image of the euclidean space the map represents on the topological visible environment around us. One of my friends points at a tree and says: *that is the tree!* Another replies: *You are wrong. It is not an elm, it is a beech tree*. I look carefully then, and I say: *there are three trees. One is an elm, the other one is a beech tree, I do not know the third one. Give me the map, please. I would consider again the exact position of the tree and see if I can individuate the right one*. A third friends then states: *It doesn't matter. There are two beeches and one elm. Look at the appearances: only the elm's branches depart really near from the ground. That is our tree!*

What is the difference between the previous situation and the present one? The former is non-conceptually observational since a subject can have a state of mind whose content is the phenomenal character of their perceptual experience without possessing, employing and exercising actual conceptions of the environment around them. On the contrary, the latter is conceptually observational since the subject enjoying the experience is lead to understand the content of their perceptual experience by their actual conception of the environment.

My conclusion is that the sensational and the representational components of a perception are clearly to be distinguished in terms of their being either non-conceptual or conceptual. If this is the case, the sensational and the representational cannot be in a relation of direct covariance. Consequently, neither the phenomenal character and content can.

6. Conclusions

Both the reasons in support of the claim *that the difference between phenomenal character and content imply they cannot directly covary* picture a very traditional approach to perception. Particularly, they endorse the idea that while perception is (at least in some degree) a manner of making use of concepts, the conceptual exercising involved in perception mainly concerns the judgements the subject implicitly draws from the enjoyment of the sensational component of their experience. Probably, my claim will result unsound to most contemporary philosophers. Indeed, philosophers nowadays show the tendency to identify judgement and belief. Contrary to this view, I affirm that the kind of phenomena related to judgement is different from the one related to belief. Every time I experience something I take that something to be in some determinate manner. This means that my experience is judgement sensitive. Naturally, being judgement sensitive implies that the subject drawing that judgement is virtually committed to possibly hold the correspondent belief. But there is no metaphysical necessity determining a subject to explicitly hold all those beliefs they would be committed to by their judgement sensitive activities.

Now, perception is evidently a judgement sensitive activity: the sensational component of perceptual experiences is the simple presentation of phenomenality; the representational component is the meaning understanding of such a presentation. All considered, what is wrong with intentionalism is the reduction of the sensational to the representational, that is, the reduction of phenomenality to noumenality in order to vindicate a direct realist approach to perception. My paper pursues the opposite end: vindicating direct realism is to reduce noumenality to phenomenality; that is, putting in the due light the fact that perception is not a propositional experience of representations, but a direct experience of objects, phenomenal character being the presentation of the state of the world around the perceiving subject.

References

- Brewer, B. 2006. "Perception and Content". *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(2): 165-181.
- Bruner, J. 1992. *Acts of Meaning*. Harvard University Press.
- Byrne, A. 2001. "Intentionalism Defended". *The Philosophical Review* 110(2): 199-240.
- . 2003. "Consciousness and Nonconceptual Content". *Philosophical Studies* 113: 261-274.

Daniele Bertini

- . 2009. "Experience and Content". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59(236): 429-451.
- Calabretta, R. 2002. "Evoluzione e modularità concettuale". In *Scienze della mente*, edited by A.M. Borghi and T. Iachini, 31-64. Il Mulino.
- Churchland, P.M. 1995. *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul*. MIT Press.
- Di Ferdinando, A. 2002. "Simulare la mente". In *Scienze della mente*, edited by A.M. Borghi and T. Iachini, 121-139. Il Mulino.
- Edelman, G.M. 1992. *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire. On the Matter of the Mind*. Penguin.
- Ginsborg, H. 2006. "Empirical Concepts and the Content of Experience". *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(3): 349-372.
- Heck, R.G. Jr. 2000. "Nonconceptual Content and the *Space of Reasons*". *The Philosophical Review* 109(4): 483-523.
- Hinton, J.M. 1967. "Experiences". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 17(66): 1-13.
- McDowell, J. 1998. "Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant and Intentionality". *The Journal of Philosophy* 95(9): 431-491.
- Martin, M.G.F. 2002. "The Transparency of Experience". *Mind and Language*, 17(4): 376-425.
- Nicoletti, R and R. Rubiati, 2006. *I processi cognitivi*. Il Mulino.
- Schank, R.C. and R.P. Abelson, 1995. "Knowledge and Memory: the Real Story". In *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, edited by R.S. Wyer, 1-85. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Tye, M. 2009. "Representationalist Theories of Perception". In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, edited by B. McLaughlin and A. Beckerman, 253-267. OUP.
- . 2009. "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59(236): 541-562.