UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

# Essays Toward an Understanding of Mind: phenomenal character, intentionality, and empathy

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Philosophy

by

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Dissertation Committee:
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# DEDICATION

To

my parents, my brother, and, of course, Zody

in recognition of their never ending love, patience, and support, even when I moved three-thousand miles away. I could not have done this without you,

what keeps me awake at night

[How] it is that anything so remarkable as a state of consciousness comes about as a result of irritating nervous tissue,
is just as unaccountable as the appearance as the Djinn,
when Aladdin rubbed his lamp

Thomas H. Huxley
The Elements of Physiology and Hygiene: A Textbook for Educational Institutions

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF TABLES

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Essays Toward an Understanding of Mind:
phenomenal character, intentionality, and empathy

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

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Professor David Woodruff Smith, Chair

The following dissertation is a compilation of three papers in the philosophy of mind. The common theme running through the dissertation concerns the relationship between two components of the mind that, during the 20th–century, were normally kept distinct– the phenomenal, and the intentional. It was a common assumption during this time that one could give a proper account of intentionality without having to account for, or discuss, phenomenality. And similarly for giving an account of the phenomenal. Recently, however, there has been interest in the idea that phenomenality and intentionality are intimately related, and so these earlier assumptions may have been misguided.

Roughly, the proposed relation between phenomenality and intentionality is this: What an intentional state is *about*, i.e., its *intentionality*, is grounded in *phenomenal*, or qualitative, aspects of experience. This is the notion of *phenomenal intentionality*. In Chapter 1 I develop an account of this kind, and argue that phenomenality is the *source* of intentionality. Because my main test cases in this chapter are sensory, more needs to be said about how my account applies to non-sensory intentional states. In Chapter 2 I seek to expand the scope of my account by

arguing that there is such a thing as *cognitive phenomenology*. This is the thesis that cognitive episodes, and their contents, have a proprietary phenomenal character, one not based in sense experience. By establishing this thesis I show that phenomenality grounds the intentionality of at least one kind of non-sensory state. Thus, in two central intentional domains, phenomenality plays a crucial role in grounding intentionality. Finally, in Chapter 3, I develop an account of empathy– the phenomenon by which we understand others– and apply the results of the previous two chapters to this account. The account of empathy I develop holds that empathy is a species of intentionality. What makes an experience one of empathy is that the formal intentional structure is modified in certain ways. As I show, phenomenality is an essential part of this experience. Thus, we have reason to think that phenomenality plays an important role in how we understand others.

# INTRODUCTION

## *§. Introduction*

For much of the 20th–century discussions of the mental tended to divide the mind into two components, the *phenomenal*, and the *intentional*. Phenomenal states are those for which *there is something it is like* for a subject to be in that state. Intentional states, on the other hand, are those mental states that are directed towards, or about things.[1] It was a common assumption that one could give a proper account of intentionality without having to account for, or discuss, the phenomenal. And similarly, it was thought that one could give an account of the phenomenal without having to discuss the intentional. Of the two, it was thought that intentionality was the easier issue. Phenomenality, after all, is the defining feature of the so-called *hard problem of consciousness*– the problem of explaining how experience, and subjectivity, arises from neural activity. And in both philosophy and cognitive science, it is still very much an open question as to how to solve this problem. Intentionality, on the other hand, seemed to many to be at least *tractable*.

Recently, however, there has been interest in the idea that phenomenality and intentionality are intimately related. This idea is not new. Presumably, early phenomenologists such as Brentano, Husserl, Edith Stein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Aaron Gurwitsch, among others, assumed this to be the case. But in the last twenty years, contemporary analytic philosophy of mind has begun to recognize this connection as well.

Aside from the inherent interest in how these two aspects of the mind are related, such a connection may have consequences for other questions in the philosophy of mind. For instance, if intentionality *requires* phenomenality, then contrary to what was assumed in much of the 20th–

[1] See below for further discussion of each notion.

century, intentionality may not be much easier to account for than phenomenality itself. And, further, if there is such a connection, then the scope of the hard problem of consciousness may be broader, and indeed, harder, than it first appeared.

In this dissertation I pick up on this recent interest, and explore the relationship between phenomenality and intentionality. The dissertation is composed of three distinct, but related papers. The first two papers deal with this issue directly, while the third paper applies the views developed in the preceding chapters to an account of empathy. What I want to do in this introduction is lay out the framework that will be assumed in, and in the background of, each chapter. Following this discussion, I give a brief overview of each chapter itself. I begin with a discussion of intentionality.

***§1. The structure of intentionality***

To say that a mental state is *intentional* is to say that the state is 'of' or 'about' something. That is, intentional states are *directed*. For instance, when I see an apple, my visual experience is directed towards the apple. While thinking about Paris, my thought is about Paris. And when I desire coffee, my desire is about coffee.[2]

Though these examples are ones of conscious states, intentional states need not be conscious. Beliefs, for instance, are intentional; they are *about* things, though the majority of our beliefs are unconscious at any given moment. Similar considerations apply to fears, long term goals, and many other states. For our purposes, however, the focus will be on conscious intentional states, which I will refer to simply as *experience*.

The present task, then, is to offer an account of conscious intentionality, an account of experience. The goal of such an account is to discern the structure that characterizes

[2] For more on the notion of 'intentionality' see Chapter 1, *§1* below. There I make a further distinction with respect to the notion of being *about* something. For now, however, the above gloss is sufficient.

intentionality. In this dissertation I will assume a largely Husserlian account of intentionality.[3] I assume this account for the plain reason that, upon reflection, I find that my experience is structured in the way identified by Husserl. It is not my intention, however, to give a detailed explication of the intricacies of Husserl's own theory. Rather, the goal is to present an account of the structure of intentionality, one which will be in the background of the following chapters.

In order to understand how the structure of intentionality is discerned, it helps to have some background on Husserl himself. Husserl was one of the founders of, indeed the father of, the phenomenological tradition. In contemporary parlance, the term 'phenomenology' refers to the qualitative features of experience. But for Husserl, phenomenology was much broader than this. For him the term does not merely refer to properties of experience, but to a way of doing philosophy, a certain kind of method, or study. Phenomenology, in this sense, is the study of the structure of conscious experience, as it is given in the first person perspective. In phenomenological reflection one reflects on different types of experiences with the goal of discerning parts of the experience, as well as the relations each part has to the others. This latter task, then, is to discern the structure of intentionality. What we come away with is a *formal* account of experience– which is to say that the structure, and parts to be identified, are of general kinds. This structure, and these parts, can be instantiated in various ways.[4]

As a first approach to this structure, let us consider a simple experience, one of seeing an apple. In such a case, there are at least three different parts to the structure. There is, (i) the *subject*, the one seeing the apple; (ii) an *object*, what the subject's experience is directed towards,

[3] This account is mostly informed by Husserl's discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 of the second volume of *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901/1970). However, two parts in particular, the background and the horizon, are informed by various sections in *Ideas I* (1913/2014).

[4] The general account I propose below will be of particular importance in Chapter 3, but it will be looming in the background in the other two chapters as well.

the apple; and (iii) the way the subject is presented with the apple, what I will call the *act-type*, in this case sight. Thus, as a preliminary formulation we have the following structure:

Subject–Act-type–Object

As will be explained shortly, this formulation is inadequate for a number of reasons. However, despite these short comings, this basic structure works well as a place to begin. We expand upon it as we go.

Start with a brief note about the *subject*. Given that our method is phenomenological, and this method is one in which experience is described from the *first person perspective*, the subject will be the self, which is referred to by use of the first-person pronoun, "I." *I* see this apple. *I* think about Paris. *I* desire coffee. What is important is that it is a subject who has an experience. Or, to put the same point differently, experiences are always indexed to a subject.[5]

For the moment, let us skip past the object, and first concentrate on the *act-type*. The act-type is one way in which an experience is directed toward an object. For instance, I *see* this apple, or I *taste* this coffee. Act-types are of general sorts. They are types or kinds, not individual instances or tokens. As such, act-types are repeatable, and may be instantiated in a variety of experiences. As Husserl points out, different act-types can be directed toward the same object, and yet each act-type does so in a different manner (Husserl, 1900-1901, vol.2 pp. 95-96). I can, for example, *see* this house, *remember* it, *think* about it, or *wish* it to burn. In each case the way in which I am directed toward the house is through a different act-type.[6]

[5] For our purposes, we need not have a metaphysical account of the nature of the self, one in which we determine whether the self is an immaterial soul, merely a body, or a psychology that continues over time. For whatever the answer to this question, the structure of intentionality will remain the same.

[6] There is a complication that I will ignore here, though it may come up at various points in the dissertation. The complication is this. The stream of consciousness will often (if not always) contain multiple act-types at once. Consider the experience of eating popcorn at the movies. As one eats, one has a gustatory experience, a visual experience, an auditory experience, and a tactile experience (e.g., the feel of the seat upon one's body). Thus, the intentional structure here described is just one aspect of the stream of consciousness.

The next part of the intentional structure to consider is the *object*. It is here where we begin to see the inadequacies of the Subject–Act-type–Object model. Many experiences, though not all, will be about an object. Such objects exist in the natural world, in space and time. However, not all intentional experiences will correspond to actual objects. When I think about a magic carpet, or suffer from a hallucination, my experience is still about something, though no actual object exists.

This appears to raise a problem. For if it is possible to have intentional states that lack an actual object, it is legitimate to ask how the state is directed toward, or about something. On the face of it, this is at the very least puzzling, as it does not seem as if one can be directed toward something that does not exist.

Here it is necessary to distinguish the object from the *content* of the experience.[7] The content of an experience presents the world *as* being a certain way.[8] It is the full manner in which things are presented to a subject. Content, then, is representational. And it is in virtue of the content that the subject's experience is directed at all. Much like a painting, or written story, can represent the same thing in different ways, different contents can present the same object in different ways. Consider a familiar example, thinking about Venus. Compare:

(i) I judge that the morning star is a planet.

(ii) I judge that the evening star is a planet.

In each case, the object is the same, as both 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' refer to Venus. However, the way in which Venus is represented in my judgment differs. In one, Venus is represented by 'the morning star', in the other, Venus is represented by 'the evening star.' The difference here is a difference in content.

[7] Smith (1989), pp. 7-8 provides three reasons to distinguish content from object. Here I only consider one.
[8] For more on mental content, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

By distinguishing the content from the object, we can begin to make sense of experiences that lack an object in the natural world.[9] Consider that without making this distinction, an experience of thinking about a magic carpet would be completely empty. *Nothing* would be presented to the subject, because no such thing exists. This would have the further consequence that every experience of thinking about non-actual objects would be identical. However, this is not the case. Thinking about a magic carpet is different from thinking about Big Foot, and different still from thinking about Big Foot riding a magic carpet.[10] By noting a distinction between content and object, experiences that lack actual objects remain distinct in virtue of the content being presented in the experience.

With these emendations, the formal structure of intentionality can be represented as follows:

Subject–Act-type–Content–Object (when actual)

I–see–this wax red apple–[wax red apple][11]

In cases of veridical experience the content "this wax red apple" will correspond to an actual wax red apple. In such cases, where the content corresponds to an actual object, there is an *intentional relation*. Where no object exists, however, the experience still has an intentional character, it is still directed. As Smith (2007) explains, when an experience lacks an object it is "*as if* intentionally related to such an object." (209, my emphasis)

This is still not a full characterization of the structure of intentionality. I mentioned earlier that though intentional states need not be conscious, our focus is on conscious intentional states. It is thus important to point out how consciousness modifies the intentional structure. Traditionally, it is thought that when a state is conscious, the subject has a kind of self-

[9] More needs to be said, however, about how this issue is ultimately resolved. For one approach, see Kriegel (2007)
[10] For further discussion, see Smith (1989), pp. 7-8, and Husserl (1900-1901/1970), vol.2, pp. 99.
[11] Here the brackets indicate the object.

consciousness, or an inner awareness, of that state. The structure of this inner awareness is beyond the scope of the present discussion. However, it is important to note that with inner awareness comes *phenomenal qualities*. I will have more to say about this below.[12] But for now let us note that, following Thomas Nagel (1974), *there is something it is like* for a subject whenever the subject is conscious. Here the phrase "there is something it is like" picks out the phenomenal qualities of the subject's experience. The notion of 'phenomenal quality' is notoriously difficult to define, and it is, perhaps, best to point to vivid examples as a way to begin illustration. Paradigmatic examples of phenomenal qualities are found in our five senses, e.g., there is something it is like to *see* red, *feel* pain, *smell* fresh basil, *hear* C Major, or *taste* fresh coffee.[13] In any experience, there will be a phenomenal, or *qualitative*, character.[14] And so, adding phenomenality to our formal structure, we have the following:

Subject–Phenomenally[15]–Act-type–Content–Object

Though we are approaching a more complete account of the intentional structure, we still do not have a full picture. For in any experience there will be a number of background beliefs that help shape the content of the experience. Call the set, or collection, of background beliefs in any given experience the *background*. If I am in a wax museum, then my visual experience of a bowl of fruit will be modified by my belief *that* I am in a wax museum. I need not be consciously aware of having this belief. Rather, as I walk through the museum, and attend to

[12] See *§2* below for a further discussion of phenomenal character.

[13] It is generally agreed that if *any* states possess phenomenal qualities, sensory states do. Whether *non-sensory* states have a proprietary phenomenal character is the topic of Chapter 2 in this dissertation.

[14] Phenomenality is but one feature of consciousness. As Smith (1989) explains, different features can be factored out of the character 'consciously,' such as inner awareness. For further discussion, see Smith (1989), Chapter 2. See also Smith (1986).

[15] I should note that the idea that phenomenality is part of the structure of intentionality is *not* the relation of recent interest. Those who have been interested in how the phenomenal and intentional are related are concerned with whether, for instance, phenomenality plays a role in determining the content of a state, or if certain kinds of states, and the contents of those states, have a proprietay phenomenology. These are the topics of Chapters 1, and 2, respectively. Thus, assuming that phenomenality is part of the intentional structure does not in anyway assume an answer to either of the above questions. That is, this assumption is neutral with respect to the questions of interest in this dissertation.

various figures, this belief remains unconscious, in the "background", modifying how I experience a bowl of fruit. I will thus see an apple *as* a wax figure. The content is here modified by my background belief that I am in a wax museum. Compare this with a normal case, one in which I am in my home, where I only have real apples. In *this* case, I would be presented with an apple *as* an apple.

The background will not only modify the character of one's experience, but it will also dispose the person to act in certain ways, and not others. If I am hungry, and I believe that I'm in a wax museum, I will not reach for what appears to be a piece of fruit, as I will not believe that the apple is real. This is not the case, however, if I believe that I am in a place with real fruit.

The background also helps shape the range of possible future experiences implicit in my present experience, or what Husserl calls the *horizon*. Smith (2007) explains:

> [T]he horizon of an act of consciousness configures the object of consciousness as having possible properties and relations beyond those explicitly presented in the act, properties compatible with the content […] of the act. (434)

When looking at this wax apple, for instance, my belief that this object is made of wax leads me to implicitly expect that if I were to cut into the apple, I would find more wax, and not a core, or seeds.

Thus, adding the background and horizon, we now have a complete characterization of the structure of intentional experience:

Subject–Phenomenally–Act-type–Content–Object (when actual)
Background: Beliefs about present experience
Horizon: Possible future experiences

I–phenomenally–see–this wax red apple–[wax red apple]
Background: e.g., I believe I am in a wax museum.
Horizon: e.g., What will happen if I bite into this apple.

This is the formal structure of intentionality that will be assumed in this dissertation. We arrived at this structure by reflecting on ordinary experiences, and noting how these experiences are structured. Next I want to say a little more about phenomenality, as it plays a major role in this dissertation.

***§2. Phenomenal consciousness, phenomenal properties, and phenomenal character***

Aside from intentionality, the other major component of this dissertation is *phenomenal consciousness*. In what follows I will not attempt to offer a *definition* of phenomenal consciousness, or any related terms. It is well known that such a definition is not forth coming. And some, including myself, do not think it is possible to give such a definition, at least not in any non-circular, and informative way (e.g., Block 1995, Chalmers 1996, and Crane 2013). Rather, the best that can be done is point towards the phenomenon as a way to get a foothold, and then propose an explanation of why such a definition is not possible. This is what I will attempt to do.

Phenomenal consciousness refers to the *qualitative* features of experience. As was noted earlier, these aspects are most readily found in the five senses. They are the way things look, taste, smell, feel, and sound. Whether other kinds of experiences have such features is an open question. It is generally agreed that emotional experiences, and bodily experiences (such as pains, tickles, and proprioception) also have a qualitative aspect to them. However, whether cognitive experiences, such as consciously thinking that infinity is quite large, have a phenomenal quality is a matter of debate.

A common way that phenomenal consciousness is referred to is by appeal to the phrase, "there is something it is like" (Nagel, 1974). Block (1995), for instance, holds that a *creature* is phenomenally conscious when there is something it is like to be that creature. And a *mental state*

is phenomenally conscious when there is something it is like to be in that state. I think this locution can be helpful, but not everyone shares my optimism. Some have complained that the phrase is unclear, or even detrimental to theorizing about consciousness.[16] Let me be clear, then, about how I understand it in this dissertation.

On my account, the phrase "there is something it is like to X" is an existential claim that posits the existence of a certain kind of property, or a combination of properties– namely, it posits the existence of a *phenomenal* property. Other suitable terms that can be substituted for 'phenomenal property' include 'qualitative aspect,' 'phenomenal quality,' 'phenomenal feature,' or 'qualia.' These properties are properties of, and intrinsic to, an experience. They compose the way in which an experience is for a subject.

This idea, that "there is something it is like" refers to how an *experience* is for a *subject* is important, for there are uses of the phrase that are not appropriate. As Charles Siewert (2011) points out, there is something it is like to be 1,000 pounds, but this need not uniquely identify a conscious experience, or a conscious experience of a subject. There is also something it is like to be in a dreamless sleep. But in a dreamless sleep there is no experience at all. Rather, phenomenal properties are instantiated only when a subject, or mental state, is conscious.

Like other kinds of properties, phenomenal properties can be categorized hierarchically. What it is like to see red, for instance, instantiates a visual phenomenal property. And visual phenomenal properties are themselves a subspecies of perceptual phenomenology. With respect to the metaphysics of phenomenal properties, I will not have much more to say. However, let me note that one way to understand the idea that there is a *proprietary* phenomenology of conscious cognitive thought is in terms of there being a class of phenomenal properties that is distinct from

[16] In this latter respect, see Lycan (1996).

perceptual phenomenology, and other phenomenal classes. This, in essence, is the topic of Chapter 2.

So far, as I have been discussing it, the phrase, "there is something it is like," picks out singular phenomenal properties. But phenomenal properties can be combined, and when they are, they constitute the *phenomenal character* of an experience. As I will be using it here, then, 'phenomenal property' refers to a singular property, one that is *basic*. This is to say that such a property is not composed of other phenomenal properties. Plausibly, what it is like to see a patch of red, or taste a grain of salt, both refer to singular phenomenal properties– redness, and saltiness. Phenomenal character, on the other hand, is complex, composed of multiple phenomenal properties. Consider, for instance, that there is something it is like to eat a ripe Granny Smith apple. The phenomenal character of this experience is composed of individual phenomenal properties, such as the apple's crunch, tartness, juiciness, and texture. Each of these components is an individual phenomenal property, the combination of which jointly composes part of the phenomenal character of eating this kind of apple. Yet these individual properties still do not fully compose the phenomenal character, as it may be modified by certain background conditions. For instance, what it is like to eat a ripe Granny Smith apple when one is very hungry is much different than eating this apple when full. Different still is a case of eating this apple when one is hungry, *and* craving this sort of food, as opposed to when one is hungry, but craves chocolate.

Before concluding this section, let me note one of the reasons why I think phenomenality resists definition. Roughly, to give a definition is to provide the meaning of a term. And it is generally assumed that meaning in some sense determines reference. When, for instance, we give a definition of 'cup', the definition refers to a particular kind of object– a cup. And, additionally,

the definition allows one to identify cups in one's environment. Because of this, we are also able to intersubjectively verify that our concepts are not empty (i.e., they pick out real things), and that we are using concepts, or terms, in the same way.

But with phenomenal properties, intersubjective verification is not possible. This is because phenomenal properties are properties that are *internal* to an experience. And so there is no possibility of identifying them in the environment. The best we can do, in many cases, is point to the things that *cause* such properties to be instantiated in one's experience. It is, perhaps, because of this that phenomenal properties are most readily identified in sense experiences, as sense experience concerns objects in the external world, and such objects can be demonstratively identified. Thus, while pointing to salt, I can say, "What it is like to taste salt just is what it is like to taste *this thing*." It is for this reason, I believe, that phenomenality is often taken to be ineffable. The problem isn't that we lack terms for discussing the phenomenal, but that when one tries to explain what it is like to have a certain experience, the only concepts available for elucidation are phenomenal concepts. One is stuck, then, within a certain conceptual domain, one that is only accessible to those who have conscious experience. This is why I think any definition of the phenomenal is going to be, in the end, circular. The phrase "there is something it is like" is one linguistic tool we have to demonstratively refer to phenomenal properties, especially ones for which we lack more specific concepts.

***§3. Overview of the dissertation***

Before concluding this introduction, let me take a moment to give a brief overview of each chapter in the dissertation. As mentioned, there has been recent interest in the idea that the phenomenal and intentional are intimately related. There are at least two questions to be asked about this relationship. First, there is a question about how phenomenality, or phenomenal

properties, are related to the intentionality of a state. In Chapter 1, I argue that phenomenality is the *source* of intentionality. That is, without phenomenality, mental states would not be directed. I thus argue for a view that has come to be known as *phenomenal intentionality*.

In Chapter 2 I discuss a second issue about the relationship between intentionality and phenomenality. The question I consider is whether consciously considering concepts, or the content of conceptual activity, has a proprietary phenomenal character. This is the question of cognitive phenomenology. I argue that it does. I thus hold what has come to be known as a *liberal* view of cognitive phenomenology. Additionally, this chapter also serves to expand the scope of phenomenal intentionality.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I develop an account of empathy, and apply the results of the previous two chapters to this account. Empathy is the phenomenon by which we understand the mental lives of others. The account of empathy I develop holds that empathy is a species of intentionality. What makes an experience one of empathy is that the formal intentional structure (see *§1* above) is modified in certain ways. As I show, phenomenality is an essential part of this experience. Thus, we have reason to think that phenomenality plays a crucial role in how we understand others.

I conclude the dissertation by briefly noting some areas for future research. In particular, I highlight an issue that I did not have space for in this dissertation, namely, how my account of phenomenal intentionality can address the issue of how *unconscious* mental states can be intentional. Following this, I then suggest how the results of this dissertation can be extended to a larger project, one that concerns the relationship between phenomenality, empathy, and communication.

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# CHAPTER I
# Phenomenal Intentionality as the Source of Intentionality

## *§. Introduction*

A central feature of the mind is that it is *intentional*– which is to say that is has the capacity to be *about* things. We can see objects, think about far off places, and imagine things that don't exist. But how is this possible? When I look at a table full of objects, how is it that my mental state is about *this cup*, and not a pink elephant? Put differently, and in more general terms, what is the *source* of intentionality? This is the question the present chapter will attempt to answer.

Since the 1970's, the dominant view has been that the source of intentionality resides in a certain kind of natural relation a subject has with her environment. The basic tenet of such a view is that a subject's mental state, M, is *about* object X, and not object Y, because the subject's state sensitively responds to, or *tracks*, X (and not Y). Within this framework, there are a number of ways to specify this tracking relation. The relation might be cashed out as asymmetric dependence (Fodor, 1987, 1990), informational (Dretske, 1981), teleological (Milikan, 1989), or other. For our purposes, the details of this relation do not matter. What is important to note is that regardless of the exact details, such views share a common assumption: How, and what, a state comes to be about something is due to a natural relation that holds between the subject, and the world. Call this basic framework the *externalist* approach.

Prior to the popularity of externalism, a view based in the structure of the mind was dominant. According to this view, a subject's mental state, M, is about object X, and not object Y, because of the way the mind is structured. That is, it is due to some intrinsic feature of the

mind, some way the mind is in itself, that makes it about one thing rather than another. Call this the *internalist* approach.

Internalism has its roots in Cartesian philosophy. Recall that in the *First Meditation* Descartes has us suppose that the external world is illusory, and nothing exists except for the meditator (and, perhaps, an evil deceiver). In this case, there wouldn't *be* an external world to which the meditator could be related. Yet the meditator still has perceptions, and thoughts about things. That is, he still has intentional states. And if this is the case, then the source of intentionality must reside in how the mind is constituted.

The history of contemporary philosophy of mind began with Descartes, and much of it can be seen as a reaction against (indeed, sometimes an overreaction) to Cartesian thought. Though the reaction began with respect to substance dualism– a view concerning the mind-body problem– it eventually grew to rebut Cartesian views of intentionality. Recently, however, there has been renewed interest in the internalist approach. In particular, the recent interest is with the idea that *phenomenality* is the source of intentionality. Or, put differently, it is due to the phenomenal character of a conscious state that the state exhibits intentionality. This idea has come to be known as *phenomenal intentionality*.

The central claim of phenomenal intentionality is in stark contrast to how the mental was discussed for much of the 20$^{th}$–century. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, for much of the 1900's, discussions of the mental tended to divide the mind into two components, the phenomenal, and the intentional. It was assumed that an account of one could be given independently of an account of the other. The thesis of phenomenal intentionality, on the other hand, denies that this can be done, at least with respect to providing an account of intentionality.

While the basic idea of phenomenal intentionality has been around since the emergence of the phenomenological tradition,[17] it is relatively new to the analytic tradition. Because of this, much work remains to be done with respect to filling in the details about what such a view might hold. And because of the relatively nascent state of the research, it is perhaps best to follow Uriah Kriegel (2013) in viewing phenomenal intentionality not just as a view, but also as a *research program*– a general framework in which there are variously related, but distinct, theses concerning a specific phenomenon. Much as externalism is a general approach to intentionality, phenomenal intentionality may be understood in a similar vien. And as some have pointed out, though in a different context, the best way to judge the success or failure of a research program is to actually do the research.[18] This is the spirit of the present chapter. My aim is to pursue, and build on, the current line of research that falls under the phenomenal intentionality research program.

More specifically, my aim is (i) to argue for the *existence* of phenomenal intentionality, and (ii) provide reasons for thinking that phenomenal intentionality is the source of all intentionality. To put the theses somewhat differently, I will be arguing for what Kriegel has called *phenomenal grounding*, and *basicness*:

> Phenomenal Grounding: "There is a kind of intentionality– phenomenal intentionality– that is grounded in phenomenal character." (5)
>
> Basicness: "Phenomenal intentionality is a basic kind of intentionality and functions as a source of all intentionality." (5)

Let me take a moment to comment on each thesis.

First, of the two, phenomenal grounding is the weaker thesis, for at the minimum it is merely an existential claim. And so, all that one needs to do to establish it is to show that there *is*

[17] Those in that tradition, however, did not refer to it as such.
[18] I think this point is due to Jerry Fodor, but I have been unable to locate the citation.

such a thing as phenomenal intentionality. This would be to show, essentially, that there are intentional states that are intentional *in virtue of* some phenomenal property.

There is a question, however, about the exact nature of the grounding relation being considered in this context. As I understand it here, grounding is an asymmetric, explanatory relation– one that explains, in this case, *how* a state gets to be intentional. The thesis of phenomenal grounding is that mental state, M, is intentional *in virtue of* a phenomenal property, or character, P. There is a sense, then, in which intentional properties depend on phenomenal properties.[19]

Let me add what I take to be the significance of phenomenal grounding. If this thesis can be established, it is something that *any* theory of intentionality must explain. This includes externalist theories.[20] The reason for this is because in order for a theory of intentionality to be viable, it must account for all instances of intentionality. Otherwise, the theory is incomplete. Phenomenal intentionality would be an instance of intentionality, and so it would be something that requires explanation.

Let us turn to basicness. Basicness is, of the two, a much stronger thesis. In essence, basicness claims that without phenomenal intentionality, there is no intentionality whatsoever. I cannot hope, however, to provide conclusive arguments for basicness in this dissertation. What I will attempt to do is provide reasons to think that basicness is true of certain intentional domains, and then suggest ways in which we might generalize the arguments.

[19] I should note that there are other ways to understand the grounding relation (Correia, 2012), or grounding in this context (Kriegel, 2013). As my aim is to show that the relation, as I understand it here, exists, I will not argue for this specific conception of grounding. Hopefully, however, the argument I propose below is general enough to be compatible with other views on the nature of phenomenal grounding.

[20] I do not mean to suggest that this is an insurmountable obstacle for the externalist, only that it is something that must be included in one's theory.

An argument for basicness could be developed in one of two ways. First, the negative approach. The negative approach would be to show that all other views regarding the source of intentionality fail. Much of this would consist in rehearsing well-worn arguments. As the spirit of this chapter is to engage in the phenomenal intentionality research program, what I propose below will be largely positive in nature.[21] This brings us to the second way one might argue for basicness– a positive account. The positive approach would first establish phenomenal grounding, and then show that phenomenal grounding applies to *all* intentional states. In order to show that all intentional states have their source in phenomenal intentionality, one would have to systematically go through each kind of intentional state, and locate the phenomenally intentional presentations that ground the intentionality of the state. This is an immense undertaking, and is why I cannot hope to provide a conclusive argument for basicness in this dissertation. What I do in this chapter, and the next, is address two central classes of intentional states, sensory and cognitive, and argue that there is reason to think these kinds of states have their source of intentionality in phenomenality. The argument for basicness provided below, then, is best seen as an argument by example, showing different ways in which phenomenal grounding occurs in our experiences.

Before moving on, two refinements to basicness are in order. First, I am only concerned with the intentionality of *mental states*. It might be thought that there are non-mental intentional entities. Examples of these are, for instance, road signs, symbols, and words. If such things are intentional, then a full theory of intentionality would have to explain how these things come to

[21] To pursue the negative route, one need not engage with phenomenal intentionality at all. For one could argue that all other views on the source of intentionality fail, and so by elimination what we have left is phenomenal intentionality. But in doing so, one need not spend a great deal of time developing an account of phenomenal intentionality itself.

exhibit intentionality. This issue is what we might call *derived intentionality*. Though interesting, how derived intentionality works is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Second, in this dissertation I will only be concerned with *conscious* mental states. Plausibly, there are intentional states that are not conscious. And while it is important to explain how such states have intentionality, it is an issue I will have to leave for another time.[22] Let me add that restricting the scope of the discussion to conscious mental states does not in anyway tip the scales in favor of phenomenal intentionality. For this restriction leaves open whether phenomenality is the source of intentionality, whether phenomenality depends on intentional properties (e.g. Tye 1995), or whether phenomenality is merely along for the ride, and has no special relation to intentional properties.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I begin with some brief terminological issues. The literature on intentionality concerns many related, but distinct issues, and so I want to be clear about which ones are relevant here, and how I understand them. Let me note that in most cases I will not be *arguing* for my use of these concepts. What I say here is largely stipulative. However, though stipulative, my choices are not arbitrary, as I try to be sensitive to the way the concepts are used in the literature. I hope not to say anything too unbelievable, or obscure. In *§2* I provide an argument that purports to establish the existence of phenomenal intentionality. If successful, this will establish the thesis of phenomenal grounding, and be the start of the argument for basicness. In *§3* I go on to detail specific kinds of phenomenal intentionality, paying particular attention to visual experience. This section further develops the account of phenomenal

[22] *Prima facie* the existence of unconscious intentional states appears to be an objection to any account of phenomenal intentionality. Michelle Montague (2013), however, comments that this issue might actually be a point *in favor* of phenomenal intentionality. Montague explains: "This seems an unacceptable consequence of my proposal: surely non-conscious mental states or occurrences like thoughts and beliefs can have determinate intentional objects? In fact, though, this is not an objection to the present proposal. On the contrary: it is a virtue of the present proposal that it reveals this as a problem, and sets us the task of explaining how non-conscious mental states can have determinate objects. The idea that non-conscious mental occurrences or dispositional mental states can be determinately about particular objects is standardly taken for granted, but it stands in need of defense." (30)

intentionality, and so functions as a continuation of the argument for basicness. In *§4* I consider some objections that may seem to arise from externalist approaches to intentionality, and explain why they are unproblematic for the present view. In the final section (*§5*) I explain how phenomenal intentionality generalizes to non-visual cases, first to other perceptual states, and then I propose how it could generalize to cognitive states. This section also serves to expand the argument for basicness.

***§1. Terminological issues***

To say that a state is intentional is to say that the state is 'of' or 'about' something. Though intentionality is commonly characterized in this way,[23] this formulation is ambiguous, as the notion of 'aboutness' can be understood in two different ways. On one reading, 'aboutness' means *reference*. Thus, to say that a state is intentional is to say that it *refers* to something in the world. On another reading, however, 'aboutness' merely means that the state is *directed*. It *purports* to refer, but it need not.

The difference between reference and directedness is as follows. In order for a state to refer, it must pick out an aspect of the world. Reference is thus relational. It incorporates (i) an aspect of the world, and (ii) a mental state, as its relata. This being the case, reference is object-*dependent*. A state cannot refer unless there exists a corresponding object. Directedness, however, is object-*independent*. A state can be directed without the existence of a corresponding object. For instance, I might point, and by my pointing mean, "That thing." But my pointing might fail to pick something out. Maybe I point at what I take to be a dog, but is really just a hallucination. In such a case my pointing is *directed*, though it does not refer. Whether or not the aboutness of intentional states is taken to merely direct, or refer, is controversial, and is often left

[23] Indeed, this is how I introduced it above.

implicit in various views. My own view is that neither is the *only* correct meaning. Rather, the two senses can each be used appropriately.[24]

These two senses of 'aboutness' are connected in an important way. A brief characterization of the relation is this. Directedness is the fundamental notion. It is fundamental in the sense that directedness *grounds* reference. Or, put differently, it is in virtue of directedness that a state can refer at all. When there *is* an object (or state of the world) towards which the intentional state is directed, I will say that there is an *intentional relation*. When there is an intentional relation, the state refers.

This distinction allows us to get clear on the claim that phenomenal intentionality is the *source* of intentionality. To say that phenomenal intentionality is the source of intentionality is to say that phenomenal intentionality directs the state. Phenomenal intentionality is what makes it possible for a state to refer. However, phenomenal intentionality is not the entire story, as there are circumstances in which phenomenal intentionality alone cannot determine reference. The reasons for this latter claim will become clear below (*§4*).[25]

Intentional states have a structure. As detailed in the introduction to the dissertation, the account of intentionality that I assume here is largely Husserlian. For the purposes of this chapter, the following schematic is sufficient:[26]

Subject–Phenomenally–Act-type–Content–Object
Background

What follows is a brief review of how to understand this structure, one that pays particular attention to *content*. Begin with the subject. The subject is the individual undergoing

[24] The above should be taken as a *rough* characterization of directedness. Directedness will be filled out further as we get clear on phenomenal intentionality itself. See especially *§2* and *§3* below.
[25] As we proceed, I will be as clear as possible about when I am using 'aboutness' or 'intentionality' in the referential, or directed sense.
[26] The structure discussed in the introduction is richer than the above schematic. Here I am only noting the parts that are relevant for the purposes of this chapter.

the experience. In any experience, there will be a particular kind of act-type, for instance, belief, desire, perception, or imagination. I *believe* that the cat is on the mat. I *see* that the cat is brown. I *imagine* that the cat is white. Act-types are directed towards some object. Call this object the *intentional object*. The intentional object is presented to the subject in a certain manner. The full manner in which the object is presented to the subject is the content of the experience. Thus, intentional objects are presented to a subject *via* content.[27] In any experience, there will be a set of beliefs that, though not themselves conscious, are in the background. And such beliefs will modify the occurrent conscious state. If, for instance, I see an apple, but believe that I'm in a wax museum, my experience will be different than if I lacked this belief. The apple will be presented *as* a wax figure. This presentation is part of the content of the experience. And, finally, when conscious, there will be something it is like to be in that state– which is to say that there will be phenomenal properties instantiated in that experience.

What I want to do for the remainder of this section is fill in some more details about content. The reason for this is because intentional states are directed *in virtue of* their content, and the view I will be proposing is that phenomenal intentionality grounds the directedness of a state. Thus, phenomenal intentionality and content are intimately related.

Again, as I understand it here, mental content is the full manner in which something is presented to a subject. Or, what I take to be an equivalent formulation, consider Brian Loar's (2003) characterization: "The mental or psychological content of a thought is a matter of how it conceives things…" (229) As Loar (2003) points out, a subject can conceive of things in many ways, perceptually, cognitively, emotionally, explicitly, implicitly, in language, in mental imagery, in memory, vividly, distortedly, and more. And so, an adequate account of mental content will have to account for all of these ways of conceiving.

[27] I will have more to say about content momentarily.

Some of the ways that a subject conceives of things occurs *propositionally*. Subjects have certain types of attitudes, such as beliefs and desires, that they take towards propositions– abstract representations that have truth-values.[28] Propositions have truth-values in virtue of having truth-conditions. The truth-conditions of a proposition is the state of the world that the proposition represents. Let us say, then, that a proposition is true if and only if the proposition correctly corresponds to the world. Consider a linguistic case. The sentence, "It is raining," expresses the proposition that <It is raining>, and this sentence is true if and only if it is raining. Similarly, if a mental state tokens the proposition <It is raining>, then again, it is true if and only if it is raining. It is partly in virtue of a mental state's propositional content that it represents, and can be evaluated for truth.

Truth-conditions are closely related to reference. If I say, "It is currently raining outside of my house," I am intending to refer to an aspect of the world. The reference succeeds, and my utterance is true, if and only if it is currently raining outside of my house. Similarly if I believe that my dog is hungry. Here I attribute a property to a thing. And my belief is true if and only if the dog I refer to is in the state I refer to– hunger.

Though propositional content dominates much of the literature on mental content, it is misleading to think that propositional content exhausts *all* aspects of mental content. This is part of the reason why I characterize mental content as I do. Mental content is the *full manner* in

[28] The exact nature of propositions is deeply controversial, so let me be clear about how I understand them here. Propositions are abstract, extra-linguistic, representational entities. They are not, strictly speaking, *in* a language. Though not in a language themselves, they are expressed *through* language, normally in the form of declarative sentences. Propositions are, we might say, the meanings of declarative sentences, and are often indicated by 'that-clauses'. Declarative sentences, however, are not the only kinds of thing that have propositional content. Mental states are often said to represent in virtue of their propositional content. Such mental states are commonly referred to as *propositional attitudes*, they are attitudes we take towards propositions. For instance, I might say that I believe *that* it is raining. Here, the propositional content is <It is raining>. In order to keep the distinction between the sentence expressing the proposition, and the propositional content itself clear, I will use '< >' to indicate that what occurs in-between the brackets is the relevant proposition. Sometimes what appears in the < > will be an individual concept. It will be clear when this occurs.

which a subject conceives of things. This idea, "the full manner of conceiving of things", needs to be fleshed out, as it can refer to a few different things.

One thing that is referred to by 'the manner of conceiving' is the act-type through which something is presented. I might *see* an apple, but I might also *touch* one, *taste* one, *think* about one, *desire* one, and so on. In this case, the manner of conceiving has to do with the act-type, or we might say, the *modality of presentation* (Smith, 1989).

Some might think it odd to include the act-type as an aspect of content. But I think there is good reason to do this, at least if we understand content as the full manner in which things are presented to the subject. To see this, consider that these act-types can present the same object, but in different ways– visually, tactilely, gustatorily, conceptually, and conatively. Each way in which the object is presented is a different manner of presentation. Importantly, different act-types can have the same *propositional* content, and yet the *content* of a state will be of a different *kind* in virtue of the operative act-type, or modality of presentation. When I *see* that the apple is green, there is visual content tokened in my experience. When I *imagine* that the apple is green, there is imaginative content. Even if it is the case that parts of the visual system are active when I imagine a green apple, the contents have different properties, and so will not be type identical. Imaginative content, for instance, presents an object as *non-real*. That is, there is a presumption that what is presented does not actually exist in the present environment. This is not the case, however, when one sees that the apple is green. Thus, in both cases, there is the same propositional content, and yet different *types* of content are involved. The manner in which the object is presented differs. And because this difference is not due to propositional content itself, it must be due to another aspect of content.

Take a different example. One can *see* that a trumpet is being played, and one can *hear* that a trumpet is being played. Again, the propositional content is the same, <A trumpet is being played>, but the content is of a different mode in each case. The point is that there are different kinds of content, and which kind of content a particular content instantiates is a feature, or property, of the content itself. And this property is determined by the occurrent act-type. I will refer to this property as the *mode* of the content.

Another way that 'the manner of conceiving' may be understood is in terms of conceiving an object *as* being a certain way. Let us call this the *as-structure* of content. For instance, we might say that I see a chair *as* a chair, as opposed to seeing it as a mere hunk of matter. For normally functioning adult humans, much of the as-structure involves conceptual categorization. That is, much of experiencing X *as* Y occurs as a kind of categorization, either by singular concepts (e.g., <Chair>), or perhaps as a definite description (e.g., The President of the United States). Importantly, this conceptual categorization need not be *conscious*. I need not explicitly think, for instance, "That's a chair." Rather, as I see the chair, I have a belief that the object I see is *of* a certain kind, and this belief may (and often does) remain in the set of background beliefs. Though these background beliefs will modify my occurrent experience, the conceptual characterization itself often remains implicit.

Whether or not the as-structure necessarily includes conceptual categorization is unclear. The answer to this depends on the nature of concepts, concept acquisition, and the relation between concepts and language. As I understand them here, concepts are constituents of thought, and like propositions, they have semantic properties. This, I hope, is an ontologically neutral characterization of concepts. The characterization, for instance, is agnostic with respect to whether concepts are abstract entities, conjunctions of predicates, or something else. For even if

it is the case that concepts are one of these things, it seems to be generally agreed that concepts must be mentally accessible to subjects who use them. And this is all that is needed for them to be constituents of thought.[29]

Returning to the as-structure, whether this structure always includes concepts depends on whether having concepts requires one to have a (natural) language. Plausibly, the answer to this question is "Yes" with respect to many concepts (e.g., <Infinity>, <Government>, <Atmosphere>, or <Universal>). But there may be basic concepts that structure all thought, such as <Object>, or bare demonstratives like <This Thing>. In the latter cases, the concept might be innate, or, at least, pre-linguistic.[30]

So there are a number of things that can be meant by the 'manner of conceiving of things'. First, there is the propositional content. This propositional content gives the truth-conditions for a particular conscious state, and so allows the state to refer. Second, there is the mode of the content itself, the *kind* of content at issue– visual, imaginative, conceptual, etc. And finally, there is the as-structure, where objects are presented *as* being a certain way, normally under a conceptual characterization, though perhaps this need not be the case.[31]

Before moving on, let me sum up the terminological landscape just discussed. There are intentional states. Intentional states are *about* things. And this means either that they are directed, or they refer. If they refer, then they are *also* directed. Intentional states have a structure, and content is part of this structure. When a state is conscious, there is something it is like to be in

[29] See Chapter 2, *§1.2* for further discussion of concepts.

[30] I mention this because I think that babies, and non-human animals, have at least some intentional states, even though they lack natural language. If they have such states, the states have content. And so it is important to consider how the world might be presented to such creatures.

[31] More will be said about each of these components of content below. See especially *§3*. Let me also note that propositional content and the as-structure are closely related. It might be objected that my distinction between the two is unwarranted. I distinguish between the two just incase there are non-conceptual ways in which things appear to subjects. These ways might be non-conceptual in the sense that one can experience something *as* being a certain way *without* having the relevant concept under which it is naturally characterized. This itself, however, depends on the relation between concepts and language, which is beyond the scope of present investigations.

that state. Part of the content of an intentional state is its propositional content. Propositions are complex meanings that are expressed through language, and tokened in mental states. Propositions are truth-evaluable, and in virtue of this, mental states are truth-evaluable. This is how mental states can accurately, or inaccurately, represent the world.

***§2. Considerations in favor of phenomenal grounding: The binding problem***

As was explained above, intentional states have propositional content. And because of how propositions are connected with reference, it is natural to think that an intentional state refers in virtue of its propositional content. The question I want to consider here, however, is one that is logically prior to asking how an intentional state *refers*. It concerns how a state comes to be *directed*. The question is this: How does an intentional state come to have propositional content in the first place? This, in essence, is just a different way of asking the main question of this chapter: What is the source of intentionality?

One might think that this is what the externalist relation is supposed to provide. The reason why, for instance, my visual experience is about *this green apple*, and not *that red ball*, is because the apple causes me to be in a certain state, and were the apple to move or change in some way, my state would change as well. And this change in mental state would not happen if the ball were moved, or changed in some way. This is kind of explanation is one of asymmetric dependence (Fodor, 1987), but a similar story could be told with respect to other tracking relations. What I want to suggest here is that this kind of explanation is further down the explanatory stream than the *source* of intentionality. For before we appeal to an external relation to fix reference, we need to set constraints on what the state might be about.

One might wonder why there needs to be constraints on propositional content, other than those imposed by an external relation. The reason for this is because such an explanation

assumes something that is in need of explaining– that is, it assumes that the subject has a general kind of thought form, but how the subject comes to have this thought form is in need of explanation. To focus the discussion, and get clear on what I mean by claiming that a subject has a general kind of thought form, let us restrict present considerations to visual experience.[32] Visual experience is structured in a particular way. To begin, visual states are directed outwards, towards the world. We see different states of the world–ways things are in our local environment. So, for instance, the way that this apple is right now is that it is green. Thus, we might think that the propositional content of this visual experience is <There is a green apple>. The thought is true if and only if there is an apple, and the apple is green. But notice that this type of thought is a thought of a more general kind. It is a thought that predicates a property onto an object. Call this an *object predication thought form*.[33] Object predication thought forms have the basic structure: This F is G.

Because object predication thought forms are of a general kind, it leaves open the exact propositional content, and so *what* the state refers to. But notice, however, that this type of thought sets constraints on what the propositional content *might* be. The propositional content will have to include reference to an object, and a property of the object. As I will explain below, having this kind of thought is grounded in experience. The reason for this has to do with the way in which the brain processes information from the environment, as the manner in which the brain does this plays an important role in how we *experience* the world.[34] If our brains were wired slightly differently, or if they malfunctioned in certain ways, we would experience the world

[32] I expand the scope of these considerations in *§5* below, and the following chapter.
[33] There are many levels of generality in-between these two levels of thought type, and this in itself poses a certain complication in thought individuation. To individuate a thought is to type-identify it, but it is not clear to me how specific a thought type must be in order for it to be individuated. This is a complication that I will not focus on here, as a proper discussion requires a treatment of its own.
[34] I am here assuming that the mental depends, in some way, on the brain. A further note, the specific considerations I am about to give might only apply to vision. However, I hope it is clear how the general point applies to many types of thought.

much differently. And in such a case, we might have different general thought types, which would put different constraints on propositional content. Our thoughts would then refer to different things, despite the fact that nothing about the world had changed.

To see why this might be the case, start with the plain observation that it is clearly wrong to say that my thought has <That's a pink elephant> as its propositional content when I'm looking at a glass of water. This is because what is *presented* in my experience is a substance with certain properties, and this presentation rules out a large number of propositions that might represent *what* is presented. Thus, the presentations play an important role in determining what the state *might* refer to. Such considerations lend support to a claim proposed, and independently argued for, by Michelle Montague (2013):

> It is not possible to settle the question of which object (if any) S is thinking about without reference to *the particular way* of thinking of an object that is involved in the thought. (28)

As I will explain, these 'particular ways' are constituted phenomenally.

To better understand the point I'm pressing, it is instructive to discuss a problem in cognitive science– what is known as *the binding problem*. The problem is this. We have experiences of objects with certain properties, such as shape, size, and color. But we have good empirical evidence that many properties, e.g., shape, size, color, and others, are processed by different areas of the brain (e.g., Treisman, 1996). Put differently, processing of various properties is distributed across many brain areas, and regions. The binding problem concerns finding the mechanism(s) responsible for binding these various properties together into one unified experience of an object.[35]

[35] There are a number of different ways in which the binding problem arises, but these details are not relevant for our purposes. See Treisman (1996) for a list of seven ways in which the binding problem occurs.

Let us take a moment to consider exactly why there is a problem here. Start with everyday experience. In our daily lives we appear to come into contact with individual unified objects. This is what Montague (2011) has called the *phenomenology of particularity*. Our brains, however, do not process objects *as* unified particulars. Rather, they process objects in terms of their properties, and the processing of properties is distributed across various brain regions. Given the way our brains process objects, we might expect our experience to match this method of processing. That is, we might expect that we experience, not unified objects, but a combination of disjoint properties.[36] Yet this is *not* how we experience objects. And not only do we experience objects *as* unified particulars, but when viewing multiple objects, say a green apple and a red book, we experience *a green apple*, and *a red book*. We do not experience a red apple, and a green book. This latter point is to draw attention to the fact that our brains *correctly* bind properties together to form our experience.

What is relevant for our purposes is the possibility that our experiences could be radically different, if only our brains worked slightly differently, or if we had certain brain lesions.[37] This could be the case even if the world remained exactly the same. Thus, our experience might have been phenomenologically different, so that instead of experiencing an *object*, we only experienced disjoint, but related properties.[38]

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[36] Or, alternatively, we might expect the processing to match the experience in that objects are processed in one area of the brain, not many.

[37] Friedman-Hill et. al., (1995), for example, focus on a R.M.–a patient who has bilateral parietal-occipital lesions. As a result of these lesions, R.M. miscombines colors and shapes, and is also not able to visually locate objects. But incorrect binding does not only occur in those with brain abnormalities, such as R.M., it can also occur under certain kinds of conditions, such as attention overload (Treisman, 1996).

[38] If this is hard to imagine, it is only because of how engrained our normal everyday perceptual experience is. Our brains do such a good job at solving the binding problem, that without the empirical research, it hardly seems as if there is any problem at all. If you have trouble imagining an experience of disjoint but related properties, try to imagine experiencing this in the same way you experience disjoint, but related *objects*. When we look at a pile of books, for instance, we see individual books, and experience them as distinct from one another. Yet they are related in that they constitute a pile. And we experience a pile differently than we do, say, an apple. This phenomenal character of "disjoint, but related," is the one I am trying to bring out in this alternative way of experiencing the world.

In such a case, the propositional content of our state would differ. Consider the following two propositions: (1) <There is a green apple>, and (2) <There is a circular patch connected to but distinct from a green patch, which is connected to but distinct from a smooth patch…> Notice that (1) and (2) have different truth conditions. (2) can be true even if (1) is false. For instance, (1) seems to require a kind of realism about mid-sized objects, whereas (2) does not. Thus, the propositions are distinct in an important way, they represent different ways the world is, or could be. (2) is compatible with a range of metaphysical views about the nature of mind-independent reality that (1) is not. Indeed, the point here is *phenomenological*, it concerns aspects of our experience, aspects that could remain the same even if there *are no distinct objects*, either because there is only one object (i.e, if monism were true), or because all that exists is an undifferentiated mass of properties. (1) is the correct propositional content of *our* visual experience because our brains work in a certain way, and so we have object predication thought forms. (2), however, is *not* an object predication thought form. If this is right, then propositional content is relevant only after we already have a *general kind* of thought. In this case, an object predication thought form.

Put differently, the way our experience presents the world sets constraints on propositional content. And to have this general kind of thought is for the mind to be directed in a certain way. It is in this sense that phenomenal intentionality is the source of intentionality. Phenomenality makes it possible to have certain kinds of thoughts, and this makes it possible for those thoughts to have propositional content. If this is right, that phenomenality sets constraints on propositional content, and different phenomenal characters impose different constraints on propositional content, then without phenomenality there wouldn't be any constraints. And because the constraints ground propositional content, without the constraints, propositional

content would be ungrounded. This would mean, then, that reference would be ungrounded. The state would not refer.

Still, though, one might grant that these phenomenal presentations ground content, but deny that the presentations *themselves* are intentional. In reply it is important to notice that these phenomenal presentations allows for a state to be assessable for accuracy (Siewert, 1998). I see what seems to me to be an object. My thought is accurate, or true, only if there are objects. This gives us reason to think that the phenomenal presentation is intentional, as a crucial feature of intentionality is that it has semantic properties, and semantic properties allow for a state to be truth-evaluable. Thus, because we are presented with objects, our thoughts have, at the minimum, propositional content that refers to what is presented *as* an object.

I have so far used the binding problem to highlight how phenomenality grounds a very general kind of thought: object predication thought forms. But the binding problem can also be used to show that more specific types of thought forms are also grounded phenomenally, and so would impose other constraints on propositional content. Consider that one way in which the binding problem arises is in how *correct* combination occurs (Treisman, 1996). There are individuals who suffer from certain brain lesions, and as a result do not combine properties properly (e.g., Freidman-Hill et. al. 1995). Return to the green apple and red book. Suppose the apple has the following properties, it is green, three inches tall, smooth, and round. Now suppose the book has the following properties, it is red, ten inches long, the cover is bumpy, and it is rectangular. First, note that with all of these properties, there is something it is like to be presented with each. Next, note that there are a number of ways these properties can be mismatched. If miscombination occurs, we wouldn't have a green-apple-type-thought, but a red-apple-type-thought, maybe even a red-rectangular-apple-type-thought. Thus, again,

phenomenality sets constraints on propositional content. And to repeat, the point is that if this is correct, then propositional content is relevant only *after* we already have general kinds of thoughts. And these kinds of thoughts are grounded in how things seem to the subject having the experience. Moreover, the general types of thoughts, and experiences, just are the ways in which we experience the world. Phenomenality structures how the world is presented to us.[39]

Let me put the point slightly differently. There is a logically prior individuator that sets constraints on what the propositional content might be. My suggestion is that the logically prior individuator is the experience itself, *how things appear*. If our brains did not bind these features together, our experiences would be much different (again, consider Friedman-Hill et. al., 1995), as would the propositional content. We could put the point slightly differently again. Individuation of thought needs to respect the way the world is presented in the first person perspective. The first person perspective is constituted by how things *seem* to the subject undergoing the experience. And it is these seemings that *ground* the propositional content. We have propositional content that refers to *objects*, and not disjoint but related properties, because of how things seem.

Before moving on, let me consider a potential objection to the above argument. The argument relies on the assumption that the way our experience is structured is *contingent*. That is, I am claiming that it is a contingent fact about how our brains are structured that we experience *objects*. But it is possible that this assumption is mistaken, perhaps our experiences are like this *necessarily*. And if our experiences were like this necessarily, then propositional

[39] One question, then, is how fine-grained phenomenal character is with regard to structuring how the world is presented in experience. My own view is that it is quite fine-grained, though perhaps not fully determinative with respect to reference. For more on this see *§5* below. In the next section I discuss various phenomenal presentations that occur in visual experience. These phenomenal presentations also set constraints on propositional content.

content might be grounded in some necessary way the mind is structured, rather than phenomenality itself.

I have two replies here, both of which rely on empirical claims. First, as I've mentioned, there are people who have certain brain lesions that make it so they do *not* properly solve the binding problem. Perhaps no one's brain works so poorly that they do not even experience objects (though I think the experience is phenomenologically possible).[40] This is an open question. But at the least we know that some people miscombine certain features. And, what's more, the healthy brain can be put under certain conditions, such as attention overload, that causes miscombination to occur (Treisman, 1996). So we have reason to suppose that our experiences could be structured differently than they in fact are, if only slightly.[41]

Second, our brains are products of evolution. And so solving the binding problem is most likely the result of a beneficial adaptation.[42] It is important to note that evolution is interested in *fitness*, and fitness is determined by how well an organism can pass on genes in an environment.[43] So in order for our brains to *necessarily* work in this manner, it has to be the case that solving the binding problem is the *only* way to survive in the environment in which our brains evolved. But this is something that requires argument and empirical research, it is not something we can just know from the arm-chair. In order to think that our brains *must* function in this way, we need reason to think that there is *no other way* an organism can experience her environment that will allow for her to pass on genetic material. We do not have *a priori* reason to think that this is the case.

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[40] Additionally, I think there is empirical research that might be used to argue for this possibility. However, due to space I will not go into this here.

[41] Notice, however, that even these slight differences lead to different propositional contents, as is shown by the red-rectangular-apple-type-thought.

[42] It is possible that this solution is a spandrel, that is, a trait not selected for, but is a result of a trait that *was* selected for. But even if this is the case, my point in the text still follows.

[43] Notice also that evolution doesn't care about the *best* survival strategy, only what gets the job done.

If the above discussion is on the right track, then in order to have a full view of intentionality, we need to recognize, and explore, some basic features of how the world is presented to us in experience. These basic features are, I submit, phenomenal *and* intentional. They are phenomenal in that they *seem* to be certain ways, there is something it is like to experience these kinds of presentations. They are intentional in the directed sense. They give structure to how we experience the world, and purport to pick out certain aspects of it. The foregoing discussion, then, ought to have established phenomenal grounding– the claim that there is a kind of intentionality grounded in phenomenal character. In the present case, the intentional states grounded in this way are visual experiences about *objects*, and which objects have which properties. This is no small result, as most, if not all of our visual perceptions are about objects. And if this is the case, then basicness has been established in the visual domain.

***§3. Phenomenal intentionality***

Call the argument given in the last section *the argument from binding*. A main feature of this argument is that our experience is structured in a particular way, we experience *objects*, individual things in (and distinct from) a wider environment. The objects appear to have properties, and these objects appear to be in relation to other objects in the environment, including ourselves. Additionally, objects appear to move through space, and persist through time. All of this is the case not (necessarily) because of how reality is structured, but because of how our brains organize information from the environment.[44] If our brains failed to bind all of these features together, our experiences would be radically different. Perhaps so radically different that it is hard to imagine. Yet despite how hard it might be to imagine, there do appear

[44] I do not want to exclude the possibility that how reality is structured could be the reason why our experience is structured as it is. Indeed, I think that the environment does play such a role. It is just that given the argument from binding, more argument needs to be given in order to show that this is the case.

to be individuals with certain brain lesions, or deficiencies, whose experience is *not* bound properly, and so, taking the empirical data at face value, we know that it is possible.

What I want to do here is focus on some of the ways in which things appear to us. That is, I want to identify some fundamental kinds of *phenomenal intentional content*.[45] Because we are concerned with how the world appears in experience, the content is phenomenological. And because the way things appear is about (directed towards) things in the world, the content is intentional, and intrinsically so.[46] As with the discussion above, these presentations constrain the propositional content. In the discussion below I continue to focus on conscious visual perception, but I believe the account is much wider, applying to all kinds of conscious thought.[47]

There is a basic kind of phenomenal intentionality, which I will call *phenomenal directedness*. Phenomenal directedness is a crucial part of attention. Begin with the observation that when we are conscious, we have many perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, among other things. Not all of these things are the center of attention. Very few are. Rather, attention brings certain parts of the world to the center, or into focus. Take a case of vision. As I look at this apple, it is on a table, in a room, near a window. Through the window I see a forest. And I can also see aspects of the forest as well. All of this is to say that visual experience is rich, and full. Attention focuses in on part of the world, while putting others in the periphery. As William James puts it in *The Principles of Psychology*:

> Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its essence. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition

[45] Horgan and Tienson (2002) refer to these fundamental kinds of content as *grounding presuppositions*. For a list of other grounding presuppositions that I do not explicitly discuss in the text, see Horgan and Tienson (2002), pp. 528.
[46] I here use the *directed* notion of aboutness, as more arguments are needed in order to show that there really are objects that correspond to the features of our experience. If there are such objects, then there is an intentional relation, and so the intentional state refers to aspects of the world.
[47] For how this account generalizes see *§5* below.

> which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called *distraction*, and *Zerstreutheit* in German. (381-82)

So in conscious experience we are presented with a myriad of things, a world full of objects. Attention focuses the experience so that it becomes about *this* or *that* thing, instead of an unstructured blur. Attention thus focuses in a *demonstrative* manner, it picks out *this* or *that* thing. And importantly, there is something it is like to focus in on one thing, or another. A helpful metaphor, one often used in cognitive science, is to think of attention as a spotlight, illuminating (bringing into focus) certain objects, while leaving others in the dark (periphery). I will here follow Montague (2011) in calling this kind of demonstrative thought a *bare demonstrative thought form*. Montague explains:

> …a bare demonstrative *thought-form* [..] can be represented as [that (thing) –] where the blank is typically filled in by 'is F', for some property F... The claim, then, is that a full description of the content of many *perceptual experiences* reveals them to involve (quite literally) a *thought*– a bare demonstrative thought, at the very least; and that it is not necessary that the bare demonstrative [that thing] refer in order for the instantiation of the bare demonstrative thought-*form* to count as a bare demonstrative *thought*. (135)

With this in mind, we can now characterize phenomenal directedness. Phenomenal directedness is the phenomenon by which attention demonstratively picks out things in one's environment.[48] Again, there is something it is like for this to occur in one's experience. To pick something out from one's environment is for that thing to be separated from the environment, and to be the focus of one's experience, while the remainder of the environment recedes into the periphery. The most fundamental level in which attention does this is in a bare demonstrative thought form. Attention attends to *this* or *that* thing. Often, when attention demonstratively picks out an object, it also predicates a property onto the object. But again, this itself might be relatively bare, the property also taking the form of a bare demonstrative: *This* thing is *that* way.

[48] Or, in conceptual thought, what attention picks out in thought.

Whether attention conceptualizes *this* or *that* thing, and whether it conceptualizes the property it predicates is a further question.[49]

So far we have mostly described the second part of this phenomenal directedness, namely, the directedness. But there are more substantive ways in which things appear, and so are phenomenally intentional. Recognizing these other phenomenally intentional presentations serves to illustrate how phenomenality grounds directedness in various ways. And while I am focusing on visual cases, many of these phenomenally intentional presentations have analogs in non-visual cases. Let us now delve deeper into a phenomenological characterization of the phenomenal aspect.

As we have been discussing it, attention demonstratively picks out *things*, individual particular objects. Thus, we have a fundamental category of phenomenal intentionality– we experience things *as* objects, as unified particulars with features. Again, I will here adopt Montague's terminology, and call this experience *object positing* (136). Object positing is a part of how things appear to us, and this is the case even if, strictly speaking, there *are no objects*.[50]

Further, there is reason to think that object positing is fundamental in the sense that it may be innate, or very close to it. Consider, for instance, research done on an infant's ability to track an object through space, even when the object is hidden. This is the notion of *object permanence*. Baillargeon (1987, 1991), conducted a series of experiments on infants between 3.5-6.5 months old. The experiments showed that infants of these age groups seem to have capacities that represent objects as permanent entities. This, on its own, is a certain kind of

[49] When it does, we then have an object predication thought form. Strictly speaking, a bare demonstrative thought form is a more basic type of an object predication thought form. The more complex version occurs when the object, property, or both, are conceptualized.

[50] What we are, and have been doing is akin to what Husserl referred to as *epoché*, or *bracketing*. In *Ideas I* (*§31-§32*) Husserl suggests that in order to isolate the phenomenological aspects of experience, we ignore epistemological questions concerning the actual existence of the external world. What is leftover are the manners in which things seem to us in experience. It is, we might say, the phenomenological residue.

phenomenal intentional presentation, one of persistence. But what I am interested here is what is required for a child to have this capacity in the first place. At a minimum, the child must experience *objects*, for in order to represent an object as having a certain property (in this case, persistence or permanence), the child must be able to experience the object itself. Further, the infant is able to do this long before she learns to speak.

A second phenomenally intentional presentation, one that is part of object positing, is *edge detection*. Edge detection is the capacity to represent the edges of things; it is the capacity to represent where a thing ends, and another begins. This is required for object positing, and phenomenal directedness, as the edges of an object help to segregate it from its environment. It is perhaps instructive to recall from physics that, strictly speaking, there are no specific edges to objects. At the quantum level there only seem to be fields, or quarks and leptons. And so where an object ends might not be very clear. However, this is in stark contrast to experience, where there normally *is* a clear point at which an object ends.[51] So now we have two fundamental phenomenal intentional contents, object positing, and edge detection.[52]

A third phenomenal presentation, one that has been mentioned in passing, is that things appear *distinct* from one another. Recognizing distinctions is a phenomenological aspect of experience; it has a unique phenomenal quality. That is, there is *something it is like* to recognize, make, or appreciate a distinction. And not only do *objects* appear distinct from one another, but we also make conceptual distinctions in thought.[53] Thus, we have reason to think that this phenomenally intentional presentation occurs in non-visual cases.

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[51] This is not true of all objects, for instance, clouds. But there are many midsized objects that normally appear to have clear edges in our everyday experience. And this is enough for the present point.

[52] Another closely related phenomenal feature is experiencing the contours of an object. Object positing, edge detection, and contour detection are all closely related. Edge detection, for example, might just be a more basic feature of object positing. I leave it here unsettled exactly how these three things are related.

[53] In fact, this is a large part of philosophical work. Reflecting on this kind of activity ought to show that there is a phenomenal quality of appreciating distinctions.

A fourth way things appear to us is as *staying the same across time*. That is, things appear to persist. Call this *persistence recognition*. Contrast this with a case in which things did not appear this way. It would seem as if a new object came into being at every moment. We would be presented with something *new* at each moment. But our experience is not like this. And again, recalling the studies on object permanence is important here. Infants do not need much time to learn that objects do not pop in and out of existence at random.[54]

Objects also appear to have *properties*. This cup seems to be round. The table seems to be blue. Again, as with all of these appearances, they need not be experienced conceptually. Perhaps all that is required is that the properties appear *distinct* from one another. All of these things are ways things appear in experience. Though we need to use language and concepts to discuss some of the way things appear, we do not necessarily need concepts to experience these things themselves.[55]

All of these presentations are phenomenal and intentional. They make the state about (directed towards) this or that thing, and they set constraints on the propositional content of the state. When I see a red round ball roll past me, I experience *this object* with *this property* moving in *this direction*. I do not experience it as, for instance, a different ball from one moment to the next.

Let me also note that the above list is not complete, and this is for at least two reasons.[56] First, there are other ways in which visual phenomena are phenomenologically presented in

[54] Indeed, there is a debate about whether infants *learn* this at all. Some hold that this is an innate capacity. For an overview of the debate about innateness see Workman and Reader (2014), especially Chapter 5.

[55] There are times, however, when concepts make things appear differently. For instance, if I were to take a wine tasting class, my experience of pinot noir would be enhanced. I would become aware of various flavors that before now never stood out in my experience. Whether *concepts* have a phenomenal character of their own– that is, a *cognitive phenomenology*– is a further issue. I discuss this issue a little further below (see *§5*). But a full treatment will have to wait until the next chapter.

[56] For other categories of phenomenal intentionality, see Loar (2003), especially the section on what he refers to as *recognitional concepts* (pp. 247-249). See also Horgan and Tienson (2002).

experience. A full list would, perhaps, require at least a paper of its own. But second, and more importantly, the above list *mainly* (though not entirely) concerns phenomenally intentional presentations of *visual* experience. Visual experience is a species of intentional experience. Namely it is a more specific kind of perceptual experience– which itself is one modality of presentation. But there are other kinds of intentional experiences, such as cognitive, imaginative, or emotive experiences. And with each of these, there are more specific ways in which one can have a cognitive, imaginative, or emotional experience. Further, for each species of intentionality, there will be phenomenally intentional presentations that ground propositional content.

What I hope to have shown here is that there are features of our experience, ways things appear to us, that are phenomenal *and* intentional. And, further, these presentations are *basic* in the sense that they function as the source of visual intentionality. To have a full list of phenomenal appearances, we would have to systematically go through each type of intentional experience, noting the different modalities of presentation, and then the various ways each act-type could be specified. Once we do this, we then proceed to do a phenomenological description of each act-type, noting the phenomenal appearances that are present. Such a task is an immense undertaking, one I cannot hope to do here. But were such a task to be completed, it would constitute a full argument for basicness, at least in the sense discussed in the introduction.

What I want to focus on next is how these phenomenally intentional features are treated in classic arguments for externalism, specifically those arguments proposed by Hilary Putnam (1973, 1975) and Tyler Burge (1979).[57] It is to this issue I now turn.

[57] Sometimes Saul Kripke (1972) is also noted as one who presented early arguments that support externalism. However, for the sake of space, I will omit Kripke's arguments from the main text, as I believe focusing on Putnam and Burge suffices for the main point. For Kripke's arguments, see *Naming and Necessity*.

### *§4. Phenomenal intentionality, Putnam, and Burge*

Issues concerning phenomenal intentionality cut across many of the same issues that arose in the internalist-externalist debate about mental content that was so prominent in the 1970's, and 1980's. Indeed, this is partly why I began the chapter by briefly noting each position. Phenomenal intentionality is an internalist position, as it appeals to phenomenal character as the source of intentionality, and phenomenal character is an intrinsic feature of the mind.[58] Because of this, one might wonder how phenomenal intentionality fares with respect to classic arguments that seem to support externalism. As we will see shortly, these classic arguments do *not* undermine either phenomenal grounding, or basicness. However, they do impose a limit on the reach of phenomenal intentionality. Thus, by considering these arguments we will be able to form a more complete picture on what phenomenal intentionality can, and cannot, do.

Hilary Putnam (1973, 1975) argued that psychological states do not determine meaning. Though Putnam's argument was originally aimed at the meaning of words, the argument extends to the propositional content of a mental state, as propositional content has semantic properties. Putnam's general idea is that we can have two phenomenal duplicates, two subjects who have all of the same experiences, but who exist in different, yet qualitatively indistinguishable environments. The difference in the environment comes in the microstructure of certain natural substances, for instance, water. Because the nature of a substance is determined by its microstructure, and the structures differ in the two environments, the state of each twin will *refer* to different things. Because of this, it might be argued that what a state is about is determined by a natural relation the subject has with her environment. So, for example, consider Oscar, and his twin, $\text{Oscar}_{\text{TE}}$. Oscar lives on Earth, and so what he calls 'water' is composed of $H_2O$. $\text{Oscar}_{\text{TE}}$,

[58] Not everyone views phenomenal character as an intrinsic feature of the mind (e.g., Tye 1995, Dretske 1996). But those who advocate for phenomenal intentionality view phenomenal character in this way, as do I. I assume it for the purposes of this dissertation.

however, lives on Twin Earth, and so what he calls 'water' is composed of a different chemical compound, call it XYZ. Because of this, when Oscar looks at a lake, he forms a belief with the propositional content <This lake is full of $H_2O$>. When $Oscar_{TE}$ looks at a lake, on the other hand, he forms a belief with the propositional content <This lake is full of XYZ>. Thus, the intentional states differ.

Tyler Burge (1979) extends Putnam's results. Putnam's argument shows that the content of natural kind terms, and mental states directed towards natural kinds, is determined by a relation the subject bears to her natural environment. But natural kinds are only one kind of thing we routinely have thoughts about. Burge goes on to show that the meaning of *social* kind terms are determined this way as well.

Burge's thought experiment is as follows. Consider Jones. Jones is a competent English speaker. He has arthritis in his hands and ankles, and has many beliefs about his ailment, much of which are true. For instance, he properly identifies the pain in his hands as arthritis, and he believes that certain medications can help relieve his ailment. One day Jones's thigh begins to hurt. The pain is similar to that in his hands and ankles, and so Jones comes to believe that he has arthritis in his thigh. As it happens, Jones's belief is false. This is because arthritis is an ailment of joints, not of muscles, bones, or tendons.

But now consider a counterfactual situation. In this counterfactual situation everything about Jones remains constant. Jones believes that he has arthritis in his hands and ankles, he feels the same pains, has the same personal history, and all of the same beliefs, including that he has arthritis in his thigh. The difference between the counterfactual and actual scenario is that in the counterfactual scenario, Jones's linguistic community uses 'arthritis' in such a way that it is *also* an ailment of bones, tendons, and muscles. In the counterfactual scenario, Jones's belief is true.

And, as before, because meaning determines extension, and the extensions of 'arthritis' are different in the actual and counterfactual scenarios, the content of Jones's belief changes. This is so despite the fact that *nothing about Jones* changes. Thus, externalism is true of socially designated concepts in addition to natural kind terms.

Do these arguments undermine the argument for phenomenal grounding given above? No. To see why, consider that a crucial assumption of each thought experiment is that in each case the subjects have the *same* phenomenal experience. For any given subject who has an experience, the intentional object of the experience will be presented as being a certain way. Both Oscar, and Oscar$_{TE,}$ *seem* to see a substance with certain properties. What each of them calls 'water' *seems* to them to be a clear, drinkable, tasteless, liquid. The way things appear is phenomenal. And, as was discussed above, they ground what the state might be about. Similarity of seemings is not only *not* undermined by Twin Earth cases, but is *required* by them. It is here where we see the ambiguity of 'aboutness' playing such a crucial role. Twins are both similarly *directed* in virtue of their seemings. And so, in an important sense, their intentional states are about the same thing: *the clear stuff in lakes, rivers, etc.* So the source of intentionality in each case resides in phenomenality. But Twins' psychological states *refer* to different things, as a thing is individuated by its nature, and the things towards which phenomenal twins are directed have different natures. So, in a different sense, Twins' intentional states are *not* about the same thing.

What this means is that is in order to fully determine what an intentional state is about, both directedness and reference are required. But the *source* of intentionality, how it is possible for a state to be about anything at all, is grounded in phenomenality. Without phenomenality, there would be no intentionality. Phenomenal intentionality is restricted, however, because there

are cases in which how things seem underdetermines reference. When this happens, an external relation is required to fix reference. And so, with respect to mental content, there are two components: (i) phenomenal components, and (ii) an external component. Of the two, the phenomenal component is logically prior, and so more fundamental than the external component. This is just another way of saying that phenomenal intentionality is *basic*. Thus, at least as far as visual experience is concerned, basicness is true.

The account, then, is this. Conscious experience presents the world in various ways. Fundamentally, these appearances are *phenomenal*. The way in which the world appears sets constraints on, and grounds propositional content. Phenomenal intentionality, however, cannot *necessarily* determine reference, as there are cases where there is more to what the state is about than how things appear, as in cases of natural and social kinds. Thus, in some cases, to completely determine the propositional content, an external relation is required. And, further, the propositional content sets the conditions for the *kinds* of things that need to exist in order for my experience to represent the world. I seem to see a clear liquid in lakes. I cannot be wrong about how this seems to me. But in order for the seeming to be 'of $H_2O$' (read as reference) I must be in the correct environment. And so in order for my seemings to *refer*, I must be related to my environment in particular ways.

***§5. Generalizing the Account***

One might be concerned that even if the foregoing account is adequate for visual intentional experience, it has yet to be shown whether the account can generalize to other forms of thought. And if it cannot, then basicness is false, or at least severely limited in scope. What needs to be shown is that there are phenomenally intentional presentations in all species of intentionality, and these phenomenally intentional presentations set constraints on propositional

content. This would be an extensive project, one I cannot hope to do here. Rather, what I hope to do in this final section is provide a sketch of how my account can be extended to the other perceptual modalities. I then move on to propose a sketch of how the account might be applied to cognitive episodes. However, the exact way in which the account is to be applied to cognitive episodes cannot receive a full treatment in this chapter. A full treatment of this issue is discussed in the next chapter.

### *§5.1 From Vision to Other Perceptual Modes*

Let us begin by discussing how the account is to be applied to other forms of perception. In audition, for instance, we are often presented with sounds that are connected with one another. Consider hearing a song. When listening to a song we are presented with a temporal sequence of sounds that appear to have a certain connection. The sounds flow into one another. They can be in harmony, or discordant. They can be in, or out of rhythm. In whatever way the sounds are combined, they form a unity. There is, then, a *kind* of object positing that occurs in audition. Sounds are presented *as* a unified whole that unfolds over time. This object positing, however, is different from that in the case of vision– it forms an *auditory* object.[59]

When trying to clarify the difference in types of object-positing– e.g., visual versus auditory– it might help to recall that visual content is of a different type than auditory content. They are different modes of content, the mode being determined by the modality of presentation. Auditory object positing is thus composed of auditory content, and so we should expect that auditory and visual objects are of different kinds. There are, however, important similarities that give us reason to think there *is* a kind of object positing that occurs in each case. The most

[59] This doesn't only apply to songs, but also hearing words. This is easiest to hear in multisyllabic words, but it applies to any auditory experience.

important similarity, perhaps, is that the auditory object is presented *as* a unified whole, as opposed to a mere aggregation of disjoint sounds.

To fill this out a little further, notice that just as we can distinguish between two visual objects, we can also distinguish between auditory objects. Consider times when we are presented with sounds that occur simultaneously, yet are disjoint, such as hearing a bird chirp, and a tree fall. Normally we are not presented with such an instance as of being one auditory object. But just because this is how the sounds are presented does not mean that they aren't actually part of one auditory object. It might be, for instance, that as I am walking through a nature preserve, I hear a tree fall, and I also hear a bird chirp. Here I am presented with two disjoint, seemingly unrelated sounds. But it might be the case that, unbeknownst to me, the nature preserve is playing nature sounds through cleverly designed speakers that look like leaves and rocks. Further, the sounds I hear are not really of a tree falling, and a bird chirping, but are part of a soundtrack. And they are part of the *same* track on the soundtrack. In such a case, though the sounds appear disjoint, the appearance does not accurately represent the world, as the sounds really are part of one auditory object, a track on the soundtrack. Thus, as with vision, we need the appearances to match up with how the world really is. The appearances set the constraints on what would count as appropriate propositional content, and so what it would take for something to correctly correspond to the appearance.[60]

Similar considerations will apply to the other senses. I will not go through them all. However, as a final example let us consider smell. Smell too has a kind of content, and it is of a different mode than vision, and audition. To give it a name, call this *olfactory content*. There is also olfactory object positing. As with visual and auditory objects, the common feature is that a

[60] We might also consider an inverted case in which a person hears what seems to her to be one song, but really there are two songs coming from two different sources.

smell, or concatenation of smells, will appear to the subject to be unified in a certain manner. Consider, for instance, the smell of vanilla, and the smell of coffee. Each of these, we might suppose, are simple smells, in that they cannot be broken down into further smell components. Now consider a case of smelling vanilla flavored coffee. When combined, they form a complex olfactory object. One is presented with, via olfactory content, vanilla infused coffee. And, as with vision and audition, though one might be presented with a vanilla-coffee-smell-object, it is possible that there is no vanilla flavored coffee in the vicinity. Perhaps there is only an open vile of vanilla sitting next to a mug of coffee, both emitting their own aroma.[61] So, again, how things appear set conditions for how the world must be in order for that appearance to be accurate.

The take away from all of this, then, is that for any perceptual experience, there will be two intentional components. First, there will be the ways things appear. These manners of appearance are determined by the particular sense modality, they will be phenomenal, and they will be intentional (in the directed sense). And second there will be a way that the world must be in order for the appearance to be accurate. Thus, there are two aspects of perceptual content, the appearance, and the propositional content. And to repeat, the propositional content is constrained by the way things appear, and provides the truth conditions for the occurrent state. If this is correct, then basicness appears to generalize to all perceptual modalities.

### *§5.2 From sense experience to conceptual thought*

Here I want to consider cognitive thought, particularly the experience of conceptual thinking. As Putnam and Burge show, the content of our concepts seems to depend upon the relation a subject bears to her natural, and social environment. The issue(s), then, is (i) whether

[61] We might also consider a more extreme case. There are times when a person smells something that is not there at all. These are known as *phantom smells*, and are sometimes indications of serious medical ailments.

phenomenal intentionality grounds cognitive content, and (ii) if it doesn't, what the relation between phenomenal intentionality and cognitive content might be.

First, though, it helps to distinguish at least two classes of concepts, those that seem to be wide in nature, and those that seem to be narrow.[62] Wide concepts are those to which Putnam and Burgean style arguments apply. Put differently, wide concepts are those that depend for their content upon the natural, and social environment. Narrow concepts do not. Among narrow concepts we find the logical connectives (e.g., not, and, or), mathematical concepts, and modal concepts.[63]

So the real question comes in trying to figure out how wide concepts are related to phenomenal intentionality. The first question, then, is whether conceptual thought has what has come to be known as a *cognitive phenomenology*. That is, whether there is something it is like to consciously think. The issue depends on cognitive phenomenology, because if there weren't a way in which thoughts appeared to a subject (if thought lacked a phenomenal aspect), then phenomenal intentionality would not apply.

There are, broadly, two general views one might take in answering this question about cognitive phenomenology. *Conservatives* hold that all phenomenology is reducible to, or based in, sensory, bodily, or emotional phenomenology. *Liberals*, on the other hand, hold that thoughts have a *proprietary* phenomenology, meaning that conceptual thought has a certain phenomenal character not based in any other kind of phenomenal character. Roughly, conservatives are usually externalists about content, and liberals are normally internalists about content. Or, at the

[62] For further discussion on wide and narrow concepts, see Loar (2003), pp. 235-238.

[63] Exactly how phenomenal intentionality is related to these narrow concepts is a substantive issue, one I cannot do full justice to here. My own view is that there is such a thing as *cognitive phenomenology*– a proprietary phenomenal character of thought. Individual concepts would also have a cognitive phenomenology, and so these narrow concepts would be presented in a certain (phenomenal) manner. Hence, phenomenal intentionality would ground what the state is directed towards. See Pitt (2004) for an extended argument in support of the idea that individual concepts have a cognitive phenomenology. See the discussion in the text below, and Chapter 2 of this dissertation, for further discussion of cognitive phenomenology in general.

least, liberals seem to be in favor of phenomenal intentionality. But now notice that if this characterization is accurate, we are able to provide a rough answer to how phenomenal intentionality is related to wide concepts.

First, suppose the conservatives are correct. Importantly, conservatives do *not* deny that thinking has a phenomenology.[64] They only deny that the phenomenology of thought is *proprietary*. Conservatives hold that the phenomenology of thought is reducible to, or based in, more familiar kinds of phenomenology, such as sensory, bodily, or emotive phenomenology. For instance, when thinking of the word 'water', they hold that one has a mental visual image, or hears the word 'water' in an internal voice (e.g., Carruthers 2006, and Prinz 2011).[65] This is how conservatives seek to ground the phenomenology of thought in sensory phenomenology. But if this is the case, then we have an answer to how phenomenal intentionality is related to wide concepts that occur in conceptual thought, namely, in a way similar to how perception is related to phenomenal intentionality. When I think of a glass of water, I have visual imagery of a glass of water. And this glass is presented *as* an object, one with certain features, etc. So there is a phenomenally intentional manner in which my thought presents a glass of water to me. Whether I am *really* thinking about water (i.e., $H_2O$), and not twin water depends on external considerations.

But now suppose that liberals are correct. Conceptual thought has a proprietary phenomenal character. This means that concepts and the like are presented, or appear, in a certain manner in thought. And this manner is distinctly phenomenological. Thus, what makes it

[64] This is not entirely accurate, as there might be some conservatives who hold a more radical view, and deny that there is any phenomenology to thinking at all. Such a view would require that it is possible for there to be a kind of consciousness that is non-phenomenal. I do not discuss this view in this dissertation for a variety of reasons. The first is that I find it implausible on phenomenological grounds. For further discussion of why I choose to ignore this view, see Chapter 2, footnote 70 below.

[65] It isn't clear that this accurately reflects the phenomenology of thinking. But I leave this issue aside for another time.

the case that I am thinking about <Water>, and not <Vodka>, is that there is a distinctive way in which <Water> appears in my thought.[66] That is, there is something it is like to think about <Water>, and not <Vodka>. Thus, phenomenality picks out the appropriate concept. And whether or not beliefs, and other propositional attitudes that incorporate these concepts, are *true*, is determined by the relation the subject has with her environment. Thus, in either case, conservative or liberal about cognitive phenomenology, we have a connection between phenomenal intentionality and cognitive thought. This is how the proposed account applies to cognitive thought.[67]

I hope this has shown that the proposed account of content applies to more than just cases of vision, and so expands the scope of basicness. Given what I have said, it is still an open question how the account applies to cognitive thought. The point has been to show that the account *can* apply. But exactly how it applies to cognitive thought will depend on one's view of cognitive phenomenology. I leave this issue for the next chapter.

### *§. Conclusion*

Recently there has been renewed interest in the idea that an internal aspect of the mind plays a crucial role in the source of intentionality. The idea has been that phenomenal character plays this role. I have argued that phenomenal grounding is true, and that we have reason to think that basicness is true in at least two cases– perceptual, and cognitive episodes. The argument for basicness, however, is not complete, as there are other kinds of intentional states. In order to

[66] Pitt (2004) is a proponent of this view.

[67] For the purposes of this chapter, I leave it undecided which view, liberal or conservative, is correct. Note also that even if there are exceptions to the above characterization regarding liberals, conservatives, internalists, and externalists, it will not matter for the above argument. For instance, if one is a liberal about cognitive phenomenology, but an externalist about content, then there is a clear way in which phenomenal intentionality is related to wide concepts, namely, wide concepts have a distinctive phenomenal character. And if one is a conservative about cognitive phenomenology, but an internalist about content, then there is some way in which concepts are grounded in the subject, though the details here would have to be filled out.

have a complete argument, one would have to consider each kind of state individually, and show that phenomenal intentionality grounds the propositional content for the state.

Finally, let me also note that while I think phenomenal grounding and basicness are true, phenomenal intentionality is not always sufficient to determine the complete content of a state. For this, a subject needs to be appropriately related to her environment, as the complete content of a state will include what the state refers to. This fact, however, does not undermine the fact that phenomenal intentionality is more fundamental, or more basic, than the external relation. And it is in sense that phenomenal character is the source of intentionality.[68]

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# CHAPTER II
# On the Existence of Cognitive Phenomenology

## *§. Introduction*

Towards the end of the last chapter I introduced the debate about cognitive phenomenology. I did this in order to show how my account of content might generalize from cases of conscious visual perception, to cognitive thought. I argued that regardless of one's position on cognitive phenomenology, it will be possible to extend the theory to cognitive experiences. However, I did not endorse a specific view of cognitive phenomenology, and so the exact details of how my theory applies to cognitive content was left unspecified. The aim of this chapter is to develop a position on cognitive phenomenology, so that I can fill in the details about how my account of phenomenal intentionality applies to cognitive thought. In what follows, I will argue for a liberal view of cognitive phenomenology– a view according to which there is a proprietary phenomenology of cognitive episodes. This thesis will be further specified in *§1*.

Let me take a moment to explain what I take to be the significance of the present chapter. Recall that in the last chapter I argued that phenomenality is the source of intentionality. That is, without phenomenality, a conscious mental state would not be directed. Though I think this applies to all intentional states, my main examples were ones of sensory states. And so showing that there is a proprietary phenomenology of cognitive episodes constitutes another step in arguing for this claim, that is, insofar as it expands the scope of the phenomenal intentionality thesis. Further, if it is the case that phenomenality is the source of intentionality, then any account of intentionality that does not address phenomenality, and the role it plays, is incomplete. Finally, if it can be shown that there is a proprietary phenomenology of thought, this would also expand the class of phenomenal properties, which in turn may have an influence on how we approach the hard problem of consciousness.

The chapter will proceed as follows. I begin with further discussion of the debate itself. Of crucial importance here is how to understand the distinction between sensory, and cognitive episodes. This is important because the debate is concerned with showing that a class of phenomena (cognitive episodes) has a certain feature (a proprietary phenomenology). In order to determine whether this is the case, we need an understanding of what distinguishes the cognitive from the sensory. Admittedly, the characterization I provide remains somewhat rough. But the discussion regarding the distinction itself is useful in that it helps to clarify the question my account is attempting to answer. The remainder of the chapter is largely composed of two sections. In *§2* I offer what I take to be new considerations in favor cognitive phenomenology. In *§3* I then attack a fundamental assumption made by all parties in the debate. If the assumption is undermined, this will further strengthen the case for cognitive phenomenology, and, I believe, show that cognitive phenomenology is an aspect of more experiences than initially supposed. Finally, in *§4* I round out the discussion by briefly explaining how my view of cognitive phenomenology is related to phenomenal intentionality.

## *§1. The cognitive phenomenology debate*

### *§1.1 Liberals and conservatives*

Before getting into the substance of the chapter, it's worthwhile to discuss the nature of the debate in more detail. After saying a little more about the two main positions, I discuss how I understand the nature of the debate itself. As mentioned, one issue that needs to be addressed is how to understand the distinction between sensory, and cognitive episodes. For the arguments one makes, and the view one holds will be constrained by how one distinguishes between the two. As we'll see, engaging in this discussion helps to clarify the question I am addressing in this chapter. I begin with a discussion of the two main positions.

Liberals about cognitive phenomenology (e.g., Strawson 1994, 2011, Siewert 1998, 2011, Horgan and Tienson 2002, Pitt 2004, Smith 2011, 2016a, 2016b, Kriegel 2015, and Montague 2015) hold that conscious thought has a *proprietary* phenomenology– which is to say that the phenomenal qualities of cognitive episodes are of their own kind. To get clear on this idea, it helps to note an example of phenomenal propriety. Consider vision. What it is like to *see* is different from what it is like to *hear*. The phenomenal properties of vision are of their own kind. Similarly for hearing, and the other sense modalities. Liberals in the cognitive phenomenology debate claim that just as vision has its own kind of phenomenology, so do cognitive episodes. That is, cognitive phenomenology constitutes its own class of *phenomenal properties*– such properties are the qualitative features of experience.

There are a few common strategies used to argue for the liberal position. Some take it as introspectively obvious that there are proprietary phenomenal features of thought. This strategy, however, is unlikely to convince those who deny the existence of cognitive phenomenology. Others argue that there are cases in which phenomenological qualities change, and yet sensory inputs remain the same. These are sometimes referred to as *phenomenal contrast arguments* (see *§2.2* for further discussion). Those who use this kind of strategy argue that because sensory inputs remain the same, a change in phenomenal character must be due to non-sensory phenomenology–i.e., a cognitive phenomenology. Finally, one might argue that phenomenal character allows for self-knowledge, in that it is in virtue of the phenomenal quality of a thought that one can know, immediately, what one is thinking (see *§2.3* for further discussion). The central argument of *§2* takes its cue from contrast arguments, but inverts what is being switched, and what remains the same. As I explain, doing this undercuts the replies conservatives normally give to phenomenal contrast arguments.

Conservatives about cognitive phenomenology (e.g., Nelkin 1989, Lormand 1996, Prinz 2011, Tye and Wright 2011, and Carruthers and Valleit 2011), however, deny that thinking has a proprietary phenomenal character. Most do not deny that cognitive episodes have *any* phenomenology. Rather, they seek to explain the phenomenal character of thought in terms of other, more familiar kinds of phenomenology. Such familiar phenomenology includes bodily phenomenology (e.g., proprioception, pains, and tickles), sensory phenomenology (including mental imagery), and emotive phenomenology.[69] So, for example, conservatives claim that when one thinks that *the apple is green*, the only phenomenology to be found is perhaps a visual image of an apple, an internal voice saying, "The apple is green", or both. Normally, the argumentative strategies employed by conservatives are defensive in nature. That is, they deny, or re-explain, the arguments appealed to by liberals.

Though I am here characterizing the debate as a dichotomy, it is best to think of liberals and conservatives as two ends of a spectrum. On the extreme liberal end, proponents will claim that phenomenology is very fine-grained, and so not only do individual cognitive *act-types* have a proprietary phenomenology, but so do the *contents* of those states. If I judge that it is raining, the act-type, judging, and the propositional content, <It is raining>, have their own proprietary phenomenologies. On the other end of the spectrum are those who deny that cognitive episodes have any phenomenology at all.[70] In between these extremes is plenty of room for various positions. For instance, it is possible to be a liberal in thinking that cognitive act-types have a proprietary phenomenology, but deny that cognitive contents have such a phenomenology.

[69] For brevity, from here on out I will refer to this entire group as 'sensory phenomenology.'

[70] This is an extreme position, and it is one that I do not directly engage with in this dissertation. I choose to ignore this view for a few reasons. First, I think the position is untenable, and do not have the space to argue against it. But second, and more importantly, most of those engaged in the debate, including conservatives, do not take this extreme position. Rather, they acknowledge that cognitive episodes have a phenomenal character, but explain it as I suggest in the text above.

Alternatively, it is also possible to have degrees of conservatism. For instance, one might claim that even emotional phenomenology is in some sense sensory, and so does not have its own proprietary phenomenology.

With this in mind, I can now begin to sharpen the main thesis of the chapter. I am a liberal with respect to the phenomenal character of act-types, *and* content. However, in this chapter I will only be concerned with the phenomenology of content. That is, I will focus on the view that a good deal of cognitive contents have proprietary phenomenal qualities. My view is thus towards the extreme liberal end of the spectrum. But before we turn to the arguments, the thesis needs to be further clarified, as I have still not said how I understand the distinction between sensory, and cognitive episodes. It is to this issue I now turn.

***§1.2 The sensory and the cognitive***

Given that the central issue in the cognitive phenomenology debate is whether there is a proprietary phenomenology of cognitive thought, we ought to be clear about what constitutes this class of episodes. Often, cognitive experiences are characterized *negatively*, in that they are *non*-sensory, *non*-imagistic, *non*-emotive, and *non*-bodily (see, for example, Prinz 2011, Robinson 2011, and Shields 2011). This, however, is illuminating only if we already have an antecedent grasp on the sensory, imagistic, emotive, and bodily. And though this is not an insurmountable obstacle, such an account is not normally given. Thus, the distinction between the sensory and the cognitive is often left at the intuitive level. This is potentially problematic for at least two reasons. First, it is far from clear what the distinction is. And second, insofar as various authors may have different accounts of the sensory in mind, there is a danger of talking past one another. In order to avoid this, let me take a moment to explain how I understand the distinction.

Aside from negatively defining the cognitive, there are two other common ways to demarcate it. First, one might give a list of cognitive states. Such a list is normally composed of propositional attitudes– e.g., believing, hoping, entertaining, wondering, etc. (see, for example, Levine 2011, Spener 2011, Strawson 2011, Smithies 2013, and Kriegel 2015). Second, one might appeal to the *conceptual* character of cognitive episodes, as opposed to the *non-conceptual* character of sensory episodes (e.g., Carruthers and Veillet 2011, Montague 2011, Tye and Wright 2011, and Siewert 2011). These two ways of marking the distinction naturally lead to two distinct questions one can ask about cognitive phenomenology: (a) Do propositional attitudes have a proprietary phenomenology? And (b) Does propositional content, or do individual concepts, have a proprietary phenomenal character?[71]

I think the first suggestion is insufficient. Though listing kinds of cognitive states may give one an intuitive idea of which states are being discussed, it does not provide a principled way of distinguishing the cognitive and the sensory– as it does not explain what *makes* the states on the list cognitive. Because of this, the first method is not explanatory. But further, even if it were explanatory, the first method is more appropriate for considering question (a). That is, the method of listing cognitive states only addresses the question about the phenomenology of act-types, it does not address the question about the phenomenology of cognitive content.

Here I will use the second method, as I think it is the most promising, and it is the most relevant to the question I am asking. The sensory is *non-conceptual* in character, whereas the cognitive is *conceptual* in character. While I think this characterization is helpful, it threatens to get bogged down in a number of contentious issues that may distract from the main discussion. Let me take a moment, then, to forestall some possible concerns.

[71] Notice that these two questions reflect the different positions one may take with respect to the phenomenology of act-types, and cognitive content.

First, if the distinction rests on the conceptual character of cognitive states, then it is important to be clear about how I understand *concepts*, and what question about concepts I am asking. For as an area of study, concepts are a big issue, and many questions can be asked with regard to them. One might, for instance, ask about the ontological status of concepts, the relation concepts have with language, or how an individual acquires concepts. None of these will be directly addressed here, though the second two will be looming in the background. Rather, my main concern in this chapter is about how concepts are related to phenomenal character. Specifically, I will be concerned with whether consciously entertaining a concept, or engaging in conceptual activity,[72] has a proprietary phenomenology, one distinct from sensory phenomenology.

With that said, let me try to give an ontologically neutral characterization of concepts. There are various positions one might take here. One might, for instance, think that concepts are abstract representational entities, sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, or mere mental representations. And, as mental representations, concepts might be mere images copied from original sense experience, or, perhaps, they might be some sort of detection mechanism.[73] But as Prinz (2002) points out, regardless of the position one takes, all acknowledge that concepts must be mentally accessible, which is to say that they are available for use in thought and reasoning.

As I understand them here, concepts are constituents of thoughts, and so serve as mental representations. This characterization, however, is agnostic with respect to whether concepts are *merely* mental representations, or abstract entities that are tokened in a subject's mind *as* mental representations. Because I am concerned with whether concepts have a phenomenology when they are conscious, then insofar as concepts must be mentally accessible, what I say below will

[72] More on conceptual activity below.
[73] See *§2.2* below for more on the idea that concepts might be images, or detection mechanisms.

apply. This is for the plain reason that being a content of conscious experience, or a constituent of thought, just is a way of being mentally accessible.

With regard to cognitive phenomenology, whether cognitive episodes have a phenomenal character is to ask whether (i) the content of conceptual *activity* has a proprietary phenomenal character, or (ii) whether consciously entertaining a concept itself (which is a specific form of conceptual activity) has a proprietary phenomenal character. By 'conceptual activity' I mean mental events that include, or depend upon, concepts. Such events include, but are not limited to, making conscious inferences, making conscious judgments, planning, thinking in a language, understanding a language (as it is spoken or written), categorizing things into types or kinds, and forming arguments in natural language. Given the above, we can now give a positive characterization of cognitive episodes: Conscious cognitive episodes are those that involve concepts, or conceptual activity.

Sensory episodes, however, are not *essentially* conceptual. This is not to say that sense experience lacks conceptual content, only that the conceptual content in sense experience is not the defining feature of such episodes. When a sensory episode has conceptual content, the episode will not be *merely* sensory, as there will also be a cognitive episode accompanying the sensory. This should not be surprising. The stream of consciousness is always composed of many different act-types at once. Just as I can simultaneously see someone and hear her, I can also see that *this is an apple*. Seeing is sensory, but categorizing an object *as* an apple is conceptual. Following Charles Siewert, then, we can characterize sensory episodes, and *merely* sensory episodes, as follows:

> [L]et's call "sensory features" those features whose possession is found in the activity of various standardly recognized perceptual modalities (vision, hearing, etc.) along with bodily feelings of pain and pleasure, cold and warmth, and kindred sensations, together with whatever analogs of these there might be in imagery (visualization, hearing words or

> music "in one's head," etc.). Finally, let's call "*merely"* sensory features those whose possession by a subject during a time is insufficient for the occurrence at that time of some conceptual activity. (237)

Conservatives, then, will claim that the phenomenal character of conceptual activity is nothing more than the phenomenology of sensory activity, where this includes mental imagery. So, when I see that *this is a green apple*, the conservative will say that once we subtract the sensory phenomenal components, such as vision, and perhaps an internal voice, there is nothing left over. We have accounted for the state's entire phenomenology. I will argue that this approach fails.

One might object to the above distinction on the ground that it assumes a view about sense experience that is contentious, namely, that sense experience has non-conceptual content. However, while this is a substantive thesis, I do not think it is one we necessarily need to worry about here. To see why, let us consider how the distinction between the sensory and cognitive fares if the existence of non-conceptual content is denied.

If the existence of non-conceptual content is denied, it might seem like the distinction between sensory, and cognitive episodes collapses. But this is not as problematic as it may first appear. If sense experience is conceptual, then the method of distinguishing the cognitive from the sensory by appeal to concepts can be preserved by distinguishing between the *kinds* of concepts involved in each case. As I discuss below, concepts, like other things, can be categorized into types, or kinds. So, if all content is conceptual, then we can say that sensory episodes include *sensory* concepts, and cognitive episodes include *non-sensory* concepts. At first, this might not seem like much of an advance, as 'sensory', and 'non-sensory' are being used to characterize the distinction. But the situation is better than it appears, as sensory concepts can be characterized in an informative way. Sensory concepts are those that are based in sense experience. On this view, concepts are derived from sense impressions. My concept <Apple>,

for instance, is derived from sense experiences with apples.[74] Non-sensory concepts, then, are concepts for which there is no sensory basis. *If* one objects to non-conceptual content, this seems like a plausible way to distinguish the sensory, and the cognitive. And, as it will turn out, the arguments I give below apply to this way of distinguishing the cognitive, and sensory, as well.

However, empiricists might object to this reformulation on the grounds that *all* concepts are perceptually derived (e.g., Prinz 2002). If this is the case, then again, the distinction between the cognitive, and sensory seems to collapse. But this empiricist position requires much argument, as there appear to be non-sensory based concepts. Concepts like <Infinity>, and <Democracy>, for instance, do not seem to refer to things that we can perceive. But even if such a case can be made, as we will see, the question I am asking remains untouched: Does conceptual activity, or consciously considering concepts, have a phenomenology that outstrips the sensory phenomenology associated with those concepts? What conservatives would have to show is that even if all concepts can be grounded in sense experience, the phenomenology of conceptual thought is nothing more than sensory phenomenology. And it is this view that I will argue against below.

What I hope the above discussion has brought out is the following: As I understand it here, the question about cognitive phenomenology is a question about the conceptual content of conscious thought. Does conceptual content have a proprietary phenomenology? I think distinguishing between sensory, and cognitive episodes in terms of conceptual content is helpful, though it might be objectionable on various grounds. If one objects to this way to this way of making the distinction, we can still use concepts as away to demarcate the two classes of intentional states. In this latter case, we distinguish between different kinds of concepts, those that are, and those that are not, perceptually derived. As we will see below, the arguments I

[74] See *§2.2* below for more on how concepts may be derived from sense experience.

propose apply to each way of making the distinction. Thus, there are a number of ways we can formulate the sensory-cognitive distinction by appeal to concepts, all of which result in the same question. For ease of explanation, however, I will assume the sensory-cognitive distinction is one in which cognitive episodes are conceptual, whereas sensory episodes are not.

***§2. The argument from narrow, theoretical, and philosophical concepts***

Let us begin by making a distinction with respect to concepts. Concepts, like many other things, can be categorized into types, or kinds. Following Loar (2003), we might start by separating concepts into at least two classes: wide, and narrow.[75] Wide concepts are those whose reference is fixed by an external relation– a relation the subject has with her natural or social environment. And so, the reference of wide concepts may change based on context. Prime examples of these are natural kind terms, such as 'water', and social kind terms, such as 'arthritis'. Narrow concepts, on the other hand, are those whose reference is fixed independently of context. Examples of these are the logical connectives, modal, and mathematical concepts.

There are further distinctions to be made. Consider what I will call *philosophical concepts*. Philosophical concepts are those such as <Knowledge>, <Metaphysics>, <Free Will>, <Explanation>, and others. These are the kinds of concepts that we try to analyze in conceptual analysis– especially when engaging in philosophical work. Conceptual analyses, presumably, are sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. If successful analyses can be carried out on these concepts, the reference of the concept is independent of context, as the conditions determine what qualifies as a referent of the concept. Because of this, it is probably best to think of philosophical concepts as a kind of narrow concept.[76]

[75] Loar distinguishes three, but this is only because it is not clear whether those in the third group are wide, or narrow.

[76] Whether *all* philosophical concepts are narrow is unclear. See footnote 82 for further discussion.

There are also what I will call *theoretical concepts*. As I am understanding them here, theoretical concepts are general categories that are posited in order to explain some class of phenomena.[77] Plausibly, examples of theoretical concepts are <Illness>, <Insane>, <Government>, <Electron>, <Career>, <Medicine>, and <Living Thing>. Whether or not philosophical and theoretical concepts are two names for the same thing may turn on whether an analysis of a given concept can be given *a priori*. Because of this, some theoretical concepts might be wide, whereas others might be narrow. With respect to the purpose, and arguments in this chapter, I do not think these issues are important. What *is* important is what is distinctive about these kinds of concepts; namely, there is no clear sensory basis for them. In the case of <Illness>, for example, we only observe symptoms, but not the illness itself. As we will see, the conservative will need to explain how there can be sensory images associated with these kinds of concepts– that is, if she is to account for the phenomenology of conscious cognitive episodes that involve them. For the conservative is able to explain away the phenomenal character of cognitive episodes by appeal to mental imagery *only if* there is imagery associated with a given concept. And at first glance, this is at the very least problematic in the case of narrow concepts, and many philosophical, and theoretical ones.

In what follows, I will focus on these three kinds of concepts, as they are harder cases for the conservative. Wide concepts are somewhat easier, as there are many wide concepts that refer to natural, and social kinds. At least some of these things have a plausible sensory experiences associated with them. <Water>, for example, can be seen, and so when one consciously thinks about water, a subject might have a visual image of water appear in her stream of consciousness.

[77] Given this characterization, it might be the case that some concepts are both theoretical and philosophical. I do not think this is problematic. It might just turn out that philosophical concepts are a particular species of theoretical concepts. The details are not important for present purposes.

The conservative can then claim that when one consciously thinks about <Water>, the only phenomenology to be found is that of the visual image of water.

Given these distinctions, we can construct an argument for cognitive phenomenology:

(i) There is something it is like to consciously consider a narrow, philosophical, or theoretical concept, or perform conceptual activity that involves them.
(ii) Such phenomenology is not identical to, or based in, sensory phenomenology.[78]
(iii) If phenomenology is not sensory, then it is cognitive.
(iv) Therefore, there is cognitive phenomenology.

Given the conservatives I have in mind, all will accept (i), as its denial commits them to an extreme view of conservatism, one not being discussed in this dissertation. With respect to (iii), remember that I am using 'sensory' to include emotive, bodily, and sensory phenomenology. According to the conservative, these are the only kinds of phenomenology there are, anything else will thus count as cognitive. The third premise, then, exhausts the possibilities. And if (i)-(iii) are true, (iv) follows. The real point of contention is (ii). To have a name for it, let us call it *NCP*, for *narrow cognitive phenomenology*.

***§2.2 In support of NCP***

There are two ways a conservative could object to NCP. Either (a) claim that all concepts are grounded in sense experience, and so any phenomenology found with a concept is based in sense experience (Prinz 2002, 2011), or (b) claim that perception is non-conceptual, but sense experience exhausts phenomenal consciousness (Tye 1995, 2000). In essence, both strategies claim that phenomenology is exhausted by sensory phenomenology. In what follows I will

[78] This notion of being 'based in' will be discussed in more detail below, when we consider a particular conservative view.

respond directly to the first strategy, specifically focusing on the work of Jesse Prinz, as his view is particularly developed in this area.[79]

Before discussing narrow concepts, and other hard cases, let us first consider how a conservative could account for easier cases. Consider the concept <Cake>. <Cake> seems to be a wide concept. It is a type of artifact, and so what *counts* as a cake may change from one context to the next (e.g., from one baking community to another, or from one culture to another). There are a few ways a conservative can explain the phenomenal character of consciously thinking about <Cake>. First, one might claim that when one consciously considers the concept, the subject forms a concurrent visual image of a cake. The image itself may be momentary, or fleeting, only appearing when the word 'cake' is spoken, or thought. But this need not be the case. If one is constructing a plan on how to eat a cake, or which way to cut it, the image might last quite a while.

This kind of view has its roots in a view of concepts known as *imagism*. Imagism has a long history in philosophy, dating back to at least Aristotle, but was explicitly championed by empiricists such as Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.[80] According to this view, concepts just *are* mental images. We derive concepts from perceptual contact with objects in the world. The perceptual interaction *causes* us to store images as copies of the originals. When a subject consciously considers a concept, a copy of the image is tokened in the subject's stream of consciousness.

To be clear, imagism is a theory about *concepts*, not phenomenology. What I am suggesting here is that conservatives can appeal to certain aspects of imagism in order to explain

[79] Since I will be arguing that there is something it is like to consciously consider narrow, theoretical, or philosophical concepts, and the phenomenal character of these concepts outstrips sensory phenomenology, what I say here generalizes to other forms of conservatism, and so also addresses the second strategy.
[80] For a helpful overview of imagism, see Prinz (2002), Chapter 2.

the phenomenology of conceptual activity, or consciously entertaining concepts. Specifically, they can appeal to the idea that even if concepts are not to be *identified* with mental images, the images represent the concept. As a theory of concepts, imagism has many well-known problems.[81] But the suggestion here is *not* that imagism is a correct view of concepts, but a weaker claim. The claim is that when we consciously consider a concept, there is often a visual (or other) mental image *associated* with the concept. This image appears in the stream of consciousness, and all there is to the phenomenology of considering the concept is the phenomenology of the stored image. The conservative need only make this weaker claim.

We need not appeal to visual images. Another suggestion is that one might hear an internal voice say a word, for instance, 'cake.' Here we can tell a similar story to the one told with vision. When one is initially introduced to a word in speech, the subject forms an auditory image that represents the concept. Thus, when one consciously considers <Cake>, one hears the word said by one's internal voice. In this case, then, the auditory image represents the concept. And the phenomenology of considering the concept is nothing over and above the auditory phenomenology.

In general, it is open to the conservative to claim that concepts have associated images in any of the sense modalities. And when one consciously considers a concept, one (or more) of the images associated with the concept is, however briefly, instantiated in the stream of consciousness. Further, once we account for all of the sensory images that appear in the stream of consciousness, there are no phenomenal qualities left over. Thus, beyond these images, the concept <Cake> has no phenomenal character. If correct, this strategy is very powerful, as it can account for phenomenal character of all perceptually based concepts. And, as was mentioned

[81] Again, see Prinz (2002), Chapter 2.

above, it is plausible to suppose that many wide concepts will have some kind of perceptual base.[82]

The difficulty, however, arises when we consider concepts that do not appear to have a sensory basis. In these cases, then, more will need to be said about how the phenomenal character of consciously considering a concept has such a base.[83] To see how a conservative could account for these cases, let us consider a specific view of concepts that faces this problem, and how the view attempts to handle it. If a view of concepts is able to account for how these hard cases can have a sensory base, then the conservative can appeal to such a view, or something like it, to show how the phenomenal character of considering these concepts has a sensory component.

A prime example of this kind of view comes from the work of Jesse Prinz (2002). Prinz (2011) himself is a conservative in the cognitive phenomenology debate, and in arguing for his view of cognitive phenomenology, he often appeals to the view of concepts he develops in *Furnishing the Mind: Concepts and their Perceptual Basis*. In *Furnishing the Mind*, Prinz argues for a modernized empiricist view of concepts, according to which concepts are mental representations that function as detection mechanisms. To say that a concept is a detection mechanism is to say that the referents of the concept reliably cause a mental representation of the concept to be tokened when the subject is in the presence of the referent. For instance, if there were an apple in front of me, then insofar as I have the concept <Apple>, the apple would cause

[82] It would, I think, be too strong to claim that *all* wide concepts can be explained this way, as there are some philosophical concepts that might end up being wide. Suppose, for instance, that cultural relativism is the correct moral theory. According to cultural relativism, what is right or wrong is determined by one's culture. But this means that the concept <Right>, <Wrong>, and other moral concepts, will have different extensions depending on which culture one is in. The point is not that cultural relativism is the correct moral theory (I don't think it is), but that whether a philosophical concept is wide or narrow depends on which area of philosophy the concept belongs, and what view is correct in that area. In any case, if there *are* wide concepts that are not amenable to the above conservative explanation, this only helps my case, so it is not an issue I need to worry about.

[83] One might claim that every concept we consciously consider has a verbal counterpart, and so there are no concepts without a sensory basis. I consider this kind of suggestion below, and argue that it fails.

me to have a representation of the apple. When conscious, concepts serve as *proxies*, or stand-ins, for the general category that the mental representation represents. As one can discern from the title of his work, according to Prinz (2002) all concepts have a perceptual basis. And this is what we would expect, since to detect a referent of a concept is to come into causal contact with the referent, and our pathways for detecting things in our immediate environment are sensory.[84] As Prinz is aware, there are many cases that do not appear to have a perceptual basis, and so in order for his account to be plausible, he must account for such cases.

First, consider cases for which a concept does not have a referent. For these concepts, such as <Unicorn>, we can appeal to rules of combination that build complex concepts out of simple concepts for which we have sensory bases. For instance, combining the simple concepts <Red> and <Chair> form the complex concept <Red Chair>. And similarly, combining <Horse> and <Horn> can form the concept <Unicorn>. Further, because what is needed is a reliable mechanism for detection, and 'reliable' is understood as counterfactually supporting, we can understand how such a concept can count as a detection mechanism as follows: If I *were* to see a unicorn, then my <Unicorn> concept *would* detect it, and so a mental representation of <Unicorn> *would* be tokened.

Aside from cases of concepts without referents, there are harder cases that involve narrow, theoretical, and philosophical concepts. However, as we will see, even if the strategies Prinz employs are successful for explaining how these concepts can have a sensory basis, the strategy fails to capture the complete phenomenology of consciously considering these concepts.

First, consider what Prinz refers to as "abstract" and "lofty" concepts; these are what I am calling theoretical, and philosophical concepts. To review, they include concepts such as <Politics>, <Epistemology>, <Government>, <Freedom>, <Metaphysics>, and others. Let us

[84] For more on how to understand concepts as detection mechanisms see Prinz (2002), Chapters 4 and 5.

consider how Prinz deals with <Democracy>. As Prinz notes, <Democracy> is an abstract concept, and cannot be touched, tasted, seen, smelt, or heard. Though democracy itself might be non-sensory, it seems plausible to say that there *are* sensory experiences that are associated with, and so can come to represent, the concept <Democracy>. If this is the case, then it might be argued that the phenomenology of the associated image will account for what it is like to consciously consider the concept. One might claim, for instance, that when one consciously considers <Democracy>, one forms a mental visual image of people standing in line near a ballot booth. This might be an example of a time when one, for instance, observed democracy in action. Or, perhaps, one just hears the word 'democracy' in one's internal voice. Moreover, these images come to *represent* <Democracy> by some causal chain that traces back to an initial impression, or experience. And when in the presence of these things, a mental representation of <Democracy> is tokened. Here is how Prinz describes the process with regard to <Democracy>:

> Etiological theories invoke a causal chain dating back to an initial baptism. On this approach, a democracy symbol refers to democracies in virtue of being introduced in the presence of a demonstratively presented democracy. Informational theories invoke law like causal relations between symbols and things. Here a democracy symbol refers to democracies in virtue of being reliably caused by them. Alternatively, one can say that the democracy symbol decomposes into other symbols that get their meaning in one of the causal ways.
>
> The adoption of a causal semantics plays into the hands of the empiricist. First consider etiological theories. If one can demonstratively present a democracy, then it must be the kind of thing you can point to. If you can point to it, you must be able to perceive it, or its manifestations. (167-68)

If this, or something like it is correct, then the phenomenology of a large class of concepts can be explained by appeal to sensory experiences that have the right kind of causal relation with the subject.[85] Concepts like <Knowledge>, <Justice>, <Government>, and other philosophical concepts may have a sensory base. We merely find a time when a person was

[85] We need not require an initial baptism. It might be more plausible to say that some type of experience came to be *associated* with <Democracy> (perhaps after repeated exposure), and was then stored in a long-term memory network. The concept then detects instances of democracy.

caused to associate a concept with a sensory experience, which then gets stored as an image, and experiences of this kind reliably cause the tokening of the image associated with the concept.

However, even if this explanation works for how a concept can have a perceptual basis, it does not accurately capture the *phenomenology* of considering <Democracy>, or performing conceptual activity that involves this concept.[86] First, observe that it is not the case that every time I think about <Democracy> the same visual image appears in my stream of consciousness. Similarly, and in line with Prinz's proposals, there may be *many* democracy symbols. Yet despite these different symbols, there is something that is *phenomenally* similar when different visual images represent the same concept within my stream of consciousness. This stands in need of explanation. For the phenomenal similarity cannot be captured by appeal to the *visual* images, as the images may be radically divergent. For instance, when one thinks about <Democracy>, one might visualize the *word* 'democracy', one might visualize people voting, or one might visualize an American flag swaying in the breeze. None of these images need to share *any* of the same features, nor resemble each other, yet I find that when I think about <Democracy>, and alter the images, there *is* something that remains constant, namely, a subtle phenomenal feature.

There are further problems for finding a visual basis for these kinds of concepts. For instance, a well-known problem is that images are ambiguous. So one can have the same image represent *different* concepts. But when we do this in thought, there is a phenomenal shift. When you visualize an American flag, and see that as representing <Democracy>, this has a much different phenomenal quality than when one visualizes the same image, but takes it to represent <Revolution>.

[86] I here remain agnostic with respect to the adequacy of this explanation. It is unclear to me whether this explanation will work in all cases, especially for those such as <Knowledge>, and <Metaphysics>, but I will not press the issue here.

The conservative might reply to the above arguments by appealing to *auditory* imagery. Even if a phenomenal quality remains when one shifts visual images, this can be accounted for by claiming that there is an internal voice that says, "democracy." When one sees the word 'democracy' in visual imagery, and then shifts to an image of the American flag, or to people waiting in line to vote, the reason there is a common phenomenal quality is because there is still a common sensory image– namely audition. If this is correct, then the above argument does not establish that there is a phenomenology over and above the sensory. It does not establish a cognitive phenomenology.

However, this response faces similar problems as those described for visual imagery. Just as we can visualize different images when we think about <Democracy>, we might also have different auditory images that represent it. One might, for instance, hear the word 'democracy', but one might also hear other phrases, or words, such as 'everyone has a voice,' or 'vote or die!' Again, the auditory images can be radically divergent, and yet there is still a similar phenomenal quality. In general, whatever problems arise for visual imagery can also arise for auditory imagery.

The problems cut deeper once we combine different visual and auditory images in order to represent the same concept. Consider the following combinations, where the first member of the set is a visual image, and the second member is an auditory image: (a){An American flag, "Everyone has a voice"}, (b){A voting booth, "Vote or die!"}, and (c){The word 'democracy', "Democracy"}. Here we have three distinct visual and auditory combinations, all of which represent the same thing. If concepts lacked a phenomenology, then there shouldn't be any common phenomenal quality between them, as each set radically diverges from the others in terms of the occurrent sensory imagery. The only common feature is the semantic content.

Further, if we deny that there is a common phenomenal quality, then each combination should be no more different than, say, (d){A clown juggling bowling pins, "Juggling"}, which we can take to represent the concept <Circus>. I, however, do find that (a)-(c) share a subtle phenomenal quality, one that is not shared by (d). If this is right, then the concept <Democracy> has a phenomenal quality. Generalizing, then, there are at least some concepts that have phenomenal qualities that outstrip sensory phenomenology. Thus, there is a cognitive phenomenology.[87]

The preceding argument is what I will refer to as an *inverted contrast case*. Standard contrast cases are a common form of argument used in the cognitive phenomenology debate (see, for example, Strawson 1994, Bayne and Montague 2011, Siewert 2011, and Smith 2016b). In standard contrast cases, sensory inputs remain the same as meanings change. For instance, ambiguous sentences such as "Let's meet at the bank," have two meanings, and what it is like to understand the sentence as referring to the financial institution is different than what it is like to understand it as referring to the side of a river.[88] Those who use this style of argument claim that because the sensory phenomenology remains constant, it cannot account for the difference in phenomenology. Thus, there is a cognitive phenomenology.

I find this style of argument persuasive, but it has been met with resistance. Prinz (2011), for example, responds by claiming that, contrary to what is assumed, there *is* a change in sensory phenomenology. When one understands the sentence "Let's meet at the bank," as referring to a financial institution, instead of a river, the subject will have a visual image of a bank, not a river.

[87] To be clear, I am not saying that the phenomenal quality *is* the semantic content, but that insofar as there is a common phenomenal quality, it is *in virtue of* the semantic content. And this is because the semantic content is the only (other) thing that remains the same as the sets of imagery shift.

[88] Other kinds of contrast cases include delayed understanding, where one initially hears what seems to be an ungrammatical sentence, and then comes to grasp its meaning after reading it through a few times. And when one comes to understand the sentence, there is a phenomenal shift. Or there are contrast cases in which one hears a sentence in a language that one does not understand, and then hears it again once one understands the language. Again, there is a phenomenal shift once one understands the sentence. Cases that have to do with ambiguities might be called cases of *interpretive switch*. Switching between the interpretations of the ambiguous sentence results in a different phenomenology.

And Levine (2011) argues that when one hears a sentence in another language, one that the subject does not understand, the person may just hear the sentence differently (perhaps as a result of parsing the sentence differently) once she comes to understand the language.

The inverted contrast case, on the other hand, switches what remains the same, and what gets switched. Because of this, the responses that conservatives give to contrast arguments do not apply. In essence, the conservative reply to contrast cases is that, despite initial appearances, the sensory phenomenology changes. If true, this undercuts the liberal's argument. Here, however, the semantic content remains the same, while all of the images change. Any *similar* phenomenology, then, has to be in virtue of cognitive phenomenology.

Admittedly, the phenomenal quality that remains the same is very subtle, but I find that it is there nonetheless. Let me note, however, that being subtle should not be surprising. There are subtle phenomenal qualities in familiar sense experience, ones that may not be noticed at first, and yet these subtle aspects have an affect on phenomenal character. When one views a painting, for instance, one might fail to notice the angle of the brush strokes. Or, when stargazing, one might fail to notice slight flickers in illumination. But if we were to change these qualities, the phenomenal character of each experience would change. Thus, just as there are subtle phenomenal components of sensory experience, ones we might fail to notice, the same could occur in cognitive cases.[89]

So far I have been focusing on <Democracy>, but these points apply more generally. We can perform similar reflections, and sensory image shifts, with <Knowledge>, <Justice>, <Free

[89] We might even expect that it is harder to detect subtle phenomenology in cognitive episodes. Objects of sense experience are out in the world. Because of this we (sometimes) are able to keep the object in front of us, and make a closer inspection. Thoughts, however, are short lived. They appear and disappear from the stream of consciousness rapidly, and so qualities of those thoughts are harder to detect. Further, when we inspect a thought, we alter the experience. We go from an experience of living through it, to an experience of inspecting it. And this may alter *what* is being inspected.

Will>, and other philosophical concepts. Thus, even if Prinz's strategy works for explaining how concepts can have a sensory basis, there is something more to the *phenomenology* of conceptual thought than whatever sensory images might be associated with the concepts.

Inverted contrast cases can also be applied to what I have been calling *narrow* concepts. Concepts such as <Infinity>, <Necessity>, <Negation>, <Contraposition>, and others, do not have experiential analogs. And so, insofar as there is something it is like to consciously entertain these concepts, by similar reasoning, there must be a cognitive phenomenology.[90]

Let me also note that the scope of this argument may apply beyond the classes of concepts I have been discussing. Though we have been focusing on philosophical, theoretical, and narrow concepts, inverted contrast cases can be applied to any concept that can be represented by multiple sets of imagery. This stronger position, however, requires further argument, one I do not have space for here. For now, then, I only mention this as a suggestion.

***§2.3 Supplementing the inverted contrast case: phenomenology and self-knowledge***

I suspect that the above style of argument will not persuade those who claim that, upon introspection, they do not find any cognitive phenomenology. This being the case, the conservative's first reply will be to claim that when one switches the sets of images, there *isn't* any similar phenomenality; (a), (b), and (c) are radically different from one another, just as different as that between (c), and (d).

I find this reply unmoving, but rather than engage in fist pounding, I think it is illuminating to consider a familiar argument in reply. Pitt (2004) argues that it is in virtue of the

[90] Prinz (2002) himself does not attempt to find sensory bases for narrow concepts such as negation, and other logical operations. Rather, Prinz proposes that logical operations are *mental* operations, not concepts (see 181-187). I do not think this proposal works to avoid the problem. Even if logical operations are mental operations, it does not follow from this that they are *merely* mental operations. And we do seem to have concepts for such operations. Additionally, insofar as we have concepts for these operations, there is reason to think that such concepts do not have a sensory basis. We cannot, for instance, have an experience of <Infinity>. Finally, even if a sensory basis can be found, we can apply inverted contrast cases in order to show that there is something more to the sensory phenomenology.

proprietary phenomenal character of thought that we are able to *immediately* know *what* we are thinking. The argument could be stated as follows: Unless thought contents have a proprietary phenomenal character, we wouldn't be able to immediately identify the content of our thought. But we *are* able to do this. When, for example, I consciously think that democracy is better than totalitarianism, I have an immediate knowledge of the content of this thought: <Democracy is better than totalitarianism>. Thus, thought contents must have a proprietary phenomenal character.

A key notion in this argument is 'immediately,' and it requires elucidation if it is to be of any use. According to Pitt, to say that self-knowledge is *immediate* is to say that it is conscious, introspectable, and non-inferential. This characterization has come under attack. Here I want to consider one of Levine's (2011) criticisms, as his critique is useful in getting clear on how I understand 'immediacy' in this context.[91]

Levine argues that Pitt (2004) fails to distinguish between two forms of self-knowledge, and because of a failure to make this distinction, Pitt's argument ultimately fails. The reason for this is as follows. Pitt claims that it is only in virtue of the proprietary phenomenal character of thought that we can identify thought contents. However, Levine claims that once we distinguish between what he calls *implicit* and *explicit* self-knowledge, we will have all we need in order to explain immediate self-knowledge. Thus, phenomenality is *not* necessary– contra Pitt. Here is how Levine characterizes the distinction:

> Explicit self-knowledge is what we have when we explicitly formulate a metacognitive thought, such as "I believe that San Francisco is a beautiful city."…This seems to be one of those special, first-person ways of knowing what I believe. I don't have to infer it from observing my behavior, and it certainly doesn't seem as if I wait to see what inner speech goes through my head and then interpret that and infer what I believe. I just seem to know. (108)

[91] See Pitt (2004) for an extended discussion of his notion of 'immediacy.' And see Pitt (2011) for his response to Levine's critiques.

> What I'm calling "implicit" self-knowledge, however, is not the result of any explicit formulation or reflection. Rather, it's the knowledge that seems to come with the very thinking of the thought itself….To implicitly know what one is thinking is just to think it with understanding. But it's a mistake to view thinking with understanding as a matter of interpreting one's own thoughts. No, one just thinks them. If they have the requisite semantic properties, then that's all there is to it. (108-109)

Notice that neither form of self-knowledge requires inference, or interpretation of what one is thinking. The difference comes with regard to reflecting on one's thoughts. In reflection we make explicit what we believe, or what we're thinking. So, as I understand it, explicit self-knowledge requires a reflective act, one in which one becomes aware *of* what one is thinking. The content of this reflective act is the thought itself. Implicit self-knowledge, on the other hand, does not require a further reflective act. Rather, it is part of the act of thinking itself.

I think this distinction is helpful, especially in how we are to understand immediate self-knowledge. As I understand it here, "immediate" refers to *implicit self-knowledge*. As with Pitt's version, this self-knowledge does not include inference. However, unlike Pitt, I do not think introspection is required. This, of course, depends on the nature of introspection, but in general, the reason I don't require introspection for implicit self-knowledge is because introspection itself is a certain act-type, and so when one engages in introspection, one changes the occurrent experience, both in terms of act-type, and content. One goes from a first order state to a second order one. When I see a tree, I am in a first order state. The act-type is one of seeing, and the content is the way the object (i.e. the tree) is presented. But when I introspect *as* I'm seeing, the act-type is introspection, and it's content is the way the object (the first order state) is presented. It is for this reason that I think introspection is most naturally part of *explicit*, not implicit self-knowledge.[92]

[92] To be sure, implicit and explicit self-knowledge are closely linked. In fact, I think that implicit self-knowledge grounds explicit self-knowledge. And, additionally, it might be the case that both implicit and explicit self-

I also agree that there is a sense in which immediate self-knowledge is conscious. It is conscious in the sense that implicit self-knowledge is part of the intentional structure (indeed, part of the content) of the experience. For instance, when I think the sentence, "Knowledge is justified true belief," I know what this sentence means, and need not explicitly formulate a judgment about the meaning of the sentence. The way this thought is presented to me is one I understand. This manner of presentation has a phenomenal quality. Much as I implicitly know how my body is positioned at any given time (without explicitly making a judgment), I also know what I am thinking. And, as with proprioception, the particular thought is implicitly known to me in virtue of the phenomenal character.

Implicit self-knowledge is a large part of our daily lives. It is present anytime one thinks, or speaks with understanding. Consider a contrast case. There are times when we speak spontaneously, and when speaking we implicitly know exactly what it is we're saying. I need not *first* hear the words coming from my mouth, and then interpret those words in order to understand what I'm saying. Rather, I just know. Contrast this with a case in which one merely parrots an explanation of something one doesn't understand. There is something it is like to do this, and the phenomenal character is much different than when you speak with implicit understanding. This observation doesn't only apply to speech, but generalizes to thought as well. A moment's reflection should make it apparent that implicit self-knowledge is a part of most conscious experiences.

It might be objected that, even if it is granted that there is a phenomenal quality of implicit self-knowledge, this aspect belongs to the act-type (say, implicit understanding), and not the *content* of the thought. But if this is the case, then the way in which phenomenality gives us

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knowledge require phenomenality. For now, however, I will only argue for the weaker claim, that implicit self-knowledge requires phenomenality.

self-knowledge in cognitive cases will be much different from other cases, and it isn't clear why this would be. Plausibly, it is because of the phenomenal quality of being in a particular body position that we have an immediate knowledge of how our bodies are positioned. Similarly for being in a pain state, or seeing a green patch before one's eyes. In each case, the content of the state has a phenomenal character, and this character seems to give us what I am calling immediate self-knowledge. To claim that cognitive episodes differ in this regard strikes me as *ad hoc*.

Let's apply this idea about implicit self-knowledge to the inverted contrast case given above. Each set, (a), (b), and (c), represent the same thing; the semantic content of each set of sensory images is the same. However, as was discussed above, none of the sets need to share *any* of the same features. The question, then, is how a subject can *immediately* know what she is thinking about when she entertains any of the three sets. Because the sets do not (or need not) share any of the same features, the conservative cannot appeal to any *one* feature that is present in all of them, and so can serve as a common feature that represents <Democracy>. It would seem that the best explanation of how a subject can immediately know the contents of her thoughts is in virtue of a particular phenomenal character that is present in each experience. The burden, then, is for a conservative to explain how one can have immediate knowledge of thought content when the sensory images that represent the same thing are not themselves the same.

Levine (2011), however, objects, and claims that there are alternative explanations to how one can have immediate (i.e., implicit) self-knowledge. Levine offers a computational-functional explanation, according to which, what it is to think a thought with a content T, is to token a mental representation (perhaps in a language of thought), the content of which is T. This is all it would be to implicitly know what one is thinking. Additionally, one has explicit self-

knowledge when one goes on to form a belief about the mental representation itself. Thus, what it is to know that one is implicitly thinking about democracy is just to token a mental representation, the content of which is <Democracy>.

But as Pitt (2011) rightly argues, this account of implicit self-knowledge does not adequately explain how the tokening of a mental representation constitutes *conscious* implicit self-knowledge. According to computational-functional accounts of the mind, thinking is just a matter of representing, and manipulating those representations according to rules. Tokening a mental representation just is what it is to think a thought. But insofar as there are both conscious *and* unconscious thoughts, more needs to be said about what distinguishes the two. Further, insofar as implicit self-knowledge is just to token a mental representation with understanding, then unless understanding is what makes a thought conscious, *all* unconscious thoughts are implicitly known. The problem is that understanding doesn't seem like it can do the job, as there are plenty of unconscious mental representations that we understand. But this then blurs the distinction between conscious and unconscious thoughts. Thus, implicit self-knowledge is not explained by this approach, and so fails to account for immediate self-knowledge.

In reply to this, a conservative might claim that what makes a mental representation conscious is that it is tokened within the stream of consciousness. This, however, doesn't require that the mental representation itself have any phenomenology. Rather, the idea is that, to use Ned Block's (2002) expression, the mental representations are *access conscious*– which is to say that they are available for free use in reasoning, and rational control over one's actions.

The problem, however, is that this doesn't really address the issue. Rather, it renames it. First, there still needs to be an explanation as to how the subject has access to the content of the representation. Having access, and being able to use it in reasoning, *presupposes* that one

implicitly understands what those representations are. Just as one cannot use a word, or sentence, in reasoning unless one understands its meaning, one cannot use mental representations in reasoning unless one already understands what the representation represents. An appeal to access consciousness, then, just assumes what is in need of explaining.

And second, this explanation fails to explain how the *subject* can know what she is occurrently thinking. As Pitt (2011) puts it:

> Even if there's some sense…in which mere occurrence of a mental representation whose content is that *p* counts as implicit knowledge that one is thinking that *p*– i.e. that the computational system "knows" which representations are being tokened– this in itself doesn't explain how *I* can implicitly know what *I'm* consciously thinking. (146-47)

If this is correct, then contrary to appearances, immediate self-knowledge is not explained. The cognitive phenomenology suggestion, on the other hand, is this: There is something it is like to think that *p*, in thinking it, one becomes acquainted with the phenomenal quality of thinking that *p*. And it is in virtue of this acquaintance that one is able to implicitly know what one is thinking, and so is able to discriminate the thought from other conscious thoughts.

The picture, so far, is as follows. When set (a), (b), or (c) appears in my stream of consciousness, I have implicit self-knowledge of what I am thinking. I have this implicit knowledge because I know what it is like to think about <Democracy>. Knowing what it is like to think about <Democracy> is to be acquainted with the phenomenal quality of thinking about <Democracy>. The phenomenal quality is not based in, or identical to, sense images, as each set diverges drastically from one another. And having this kind of knowledge cannot be explained computationally-functionally, because such an account fails to adequately distinguish conscious, as opposed to unconscious, implicit self-knowledge. This being the case, it does not explain what

is in need of explaining. We can solve this issue if we acknowledge that there is cognitive phenomenology.[93]

Before moving onto the next section, let me briefly review. I began the section by noting that there are many concepts that appear to lack a sensory basis. If the phenomenology of considering concepts (simpliciter) is nothing other than the phenomenology of the associated sense images, then concepts that lack a sensory basis pose a problem for the conservative. I considered how Prinz has tried to ground various hard cases of concepts in sense experience, and argued that even if he is successful, we can use inverted contrast arguments (in addition to a version of the self-knowledge argument) to show that there is more to the phenomenology of considering these concepts than the associated sense images. While I have focused explicitly on Prinz, inverted contrast arguments apply more generally. If the arguments above are correct, then there is a cognitive phenomenology for at least some concepts. Thus, NCP is true. Additionally, this would establish that a liberal position in cognitive phenomenology is correct, and would also serve to expand the argument for basicness regarding phenomenal intentionality– the idea that all conscious mental states have their intentionality grounded in phenomenality.[94]

In the next section, I want to develop a line of argument that, if successful, expands the scope of cognitive phenomenology while limiting the resources of conservatives in replying to liberals, especially in replying to standard contrast cases. I will argue that mental imagery is not *purely* sensory, and so appealing to mental imagery includes cognitive aspects.

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[93] Perhaps one will object that what I am calling implicit self-knowledge is not really a form of knowledge. Knowledge, it will be argued, requires some sort of justification. But in cases of implicit self-knowledge, it is not clear that there is any justification for what one "knows" or "understands."

But at this point, we seem to be arguing over terminology. Even if implicit self-knowledge is not actually a form of knowledge *per se*, but something else, it *does* seem to be a real phenomenon, regardless of what we call it. As I think a thought, or I utter a sentence, I simultaneously understand *what* is being thought, or said. If this is a real phenomenon, and I think it is, it needs to be accounted for. The arguments given against the computational-functional account are not epistemological, but are based on a failure to distinguish conscious and unconscious thoughts.

[94] More on this in *§4* below.

### *§3. A more radical thesis: Why mental imagery is not purely sensory*

If successful, the above arguments have given us reason to think that at least some cognitive episodes have a proprietary phenomenology. Namely, these are the episodes that include certain classes of concepts– narrow, philosophical, and theoretical concepts. The general strategy was to show that even if there are always images associated with cognitive episodes, where those images appear in the stream of consciousness, there is more to the phenomenology of conceptual activity than these images. Though I do not think this is an accurate description of the phenomenology of cognitive episodes, in what follows I will continue to grant the conservatives this assumption.[95] This is mainly because I will argue that the assumption itself incorporates cognitive phenomenological elements. That is, I will be disputing the claim that the phenomenology of mental imagery is *purely* sensory in nature. Importantly, conservatives and liberals *both* make this assumption, either explicitly, or in the course of characterizing the issue of cognitive phenomenology itself.[96] It is, for example, this assumption that allows conservatives to appeal to mental imagery in explaining the phenomenology of cognitive episodes, that is, *without* having to allow the existence of a proprietary cognitive phenomenology.[97] The present aim is to show that there are reasons to think that the assumption is false. What I will attempt to show is that mental imagery itself includes cognitive (i.e., conceptual) aspects, ones that lack a sensory basis.

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[95] In order to show that this assumption is false, one needs to establish the existence of imageless thoughts. Some (Siewert, 1998) have attempted to provide examples of such cases, but it has been met with resistance. Prinz (2011) argues that the evidence for such thoughts are based on introspection, and the history of introspection is wrought with problems. Thus, while I agree with Siewert, and others, any examples I put forth are likely to be unconvincing. The aim here is to show that the assumption that all thoughts include images is actually of no help to the conservative. If correct, this then makes the issue of imageless thoughts irrelevant for present purposes.

[96] For examples of liberals who do this, see Levine (2011), Siewert (2011), and Strawson (2011). For examples of conservatives, see Lormand, (1996), Prinz (2011), Tye and Wright (2011). Smithies (2013), also makes this assumption in describing the debate, though it is not clear what position he holds.

[97] Recall from above that one way in which Prinz (2011) responds to contrast cases is by appealing to different visual imagery.

Let me be clear about how this thesis differs from the thesis of *§2*. In *§2* I argued that there are proprietary phenomenological qualities in cognitive episodes that outstrip sensory phenomenology. In essence, I did this by showing that mental images do not exhaust the phenomenological qualities of conceptual thought. These other qualities are *over and above* the images. The thesis of *this* section is that mental imagery itself includes non-sensory phenomenology. Thus, there are cognitive phenomenal qualities that are *part of* the images.

Admittedly, the present thesis is more radical than the idea that there is a cognitive phenomenology. I do not claim to have knockdown arguments. Nonetheless, I think a case can be made. And such a case can provide reason to reconsider an uncontested assumption made in this debate. If I am correct, the conservative cannot use mental imagery to argue for the thesis that there is no phenomenology over and above sensory phenomenology. For here too there is conceptual content, and it is partly in virtue of this conceptual content that an experience has the phenomenal character it does. And, if the above assumption is wrong, this undercuts certain replies conservatives make to standard contrast cases. This, in turn, strengthens arguments for the liberal case, and significantly weakens the conservative position, as it severely restricts the class of phenomena conservatives can appeal to in defending their view.

Let me say one last thing by way of clarifying my thesis. I do not want to dispute the idea that mental images are derived from sense experiences. The empiricist idea that stored images are copies of original experiences is not what I will be attacking. With respect to that claim, I remain agnostic. Rather, I will be concerned with experiences *of*, or that *include*, mental imagery. My claim is that when we do a phenomenological description of these experiences, we see that the experiences at least implicitly involve concepts that contribute (phenomenologically) to the experience, and these concepts are of the kind discussed in the first half of the chapter.

They are concepts that lack a sensory basis. One potentially tricky issue is that the images that accompany understanding a sentence, or other cognitive episodes, are fleeting and momentary. Because of this, the features I am going to point out may be difficult to detect. Nevertheless, I think they are there. Hopefully the examples I choose here work to bring them out.

As a starting point, let us begin the phenomenological description of mental imagery with a Humean claim: What distinguishes impressions (original sense experience) from ideas (mental images) is that impressions are more vivid, or more forceful, than ideas. Or, in our terms, sense experience is more vivid than the mental imagery based on, or copied from, those experiences.

Begin with cases of visual imagery. Consider a case of thinking about a green apple. According to conservatives there will be a visual image of a green apple. Proponents of a conservative approach would likely claim that my visual imagery is to be explained by appeal to the phenomenal properties of actual visual experience. After all, my visual image represents the apple as a green object, as a round object, as an *object*, etc. All of these phenomenal properties are ones grounded in my actual acquaintance with the properties of visual experience.

However, while this may be true, the above list is not a complete phenomenological description of an experience of visual imagery. And as we will see, the full phenomenological description includes features that outstrip sensory qualities. Consider that in addition to being less vivid, visual imagery has at least one feature that distinguishes it from actual experience. First and foremost, visual imagery is presented as *non-real* (NR).[98] For healthy individuals, there is no trouble in immediately knowing that the images that appear in the stream of consciousness are not *actually* before one's eyes. That is, being presented as NR is that of being presented as not existing in space, and more to the point, not existing with me, here, right now. Most of the

[98] From here on out I will use NR to refer to the non-real manner in which something is presented, or as an abbreviation for the concept <Non-real>.

time the image will not be represented like this *explicitly*. Rather, it is an implicit manner in which mental imagery is presented. I take it that this is a somewhat plain observation. But it has important consequences– namely, the consequences show that mental imagery incorporates a proprietary cognitive phenomenology. To establish this, what needs to be shown is, (i) NR alters the phenomenology, (ii) NR is cognitive, and (iii) NR lacks a sensory basis. I begin with (i).

NR alters the phenomenal character of an experience, and it does so in a few ways. First, the presentation of NR has a distinctive phenomenological quality.[99] Importantly, this non-real manner is not *merely* due to the image being less vivid, or less forceful. For there are times when actual perception presents objects fainter than at other times, and there are times when non-real things are presented extremely vividly. In the first case, consider seeing a distant star blink at night. The change might be very faint, but still perceptible, and when one sees this, one takes it as actually happening (i.e. real). Or, in cases of audition, there are times when one can hear a faint sound, though the sound is presented *as real*.

In the second case, it is possible to have very vivid lucid dreams– times when one is aware that one is dreaming, and yet everything looks and feels just as it does as when one is fully awake. Additionally, *knowing* (or believing) that what one is experiencing is not real has the phenomenal quality of being presented as NR. There is something distinctive about being in an environment one knows to be fake.[100] Given these situations, vividness, or forcefulness, does not sufficiently account for NR.

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[99] Unfortunately, there is not much argument that can be given here. It is merely apparent in simple introspection. Nonetheless, I will try to provide a few examples that I think bring out the phenomenological quality I am pointing towards.

[100] Alternatively, there are also times when *real life* is presented as non-real. It is common that, after having a lucid dream, one has what is referred to as a *false awakening*. This is when a subject "wakes up" from one dream into another. Sometimes this happens multiple times before the person *really* wakes up. When one has multiple false awakenings, and then *finally* wakes up for real, one may have the sense that he is still dreaming, and so his environment is presented as NR. For those who have never had such an experience, I suspect that in the future it will

Consider also a second way in which NR alters the experience. The non-real character will change the set of possible interactions one may have with the object. This set of possible experiences is itself implicit in any conscious experience of an object. This is what Husserl (1913/2014) calls the *horizon*. Consider that when I see an apple in front of me, I implicitly believe that it is possible to pick it up, eat it, cut it open, or turn it over. And if I were to turn it over, I would see another side, not a hollowed out façade. When I *visually imagine* the apple, however, some (or all) of these things fail to be implicit in my experience. For instance, when I imagine an apple, I do not implicitly believe that I can eat it. Thus, we might say that it is partly in virtue of NR that my horizon changes.[101] And the set of horizonal possibilities itself has a qualitative character that alters the overall phenomenal character of the experience. It is, for these reasons, that I think the NR manner of presentation is something over and above sensory phenomenology.

Next, let us consider how this non-real character is related to conceptual activity. For if mental imagery is not related to concepts, or conceptual activity, then based on the distinction I endorse in this chapter, mental imagery, and NR, would fall under sensory states. This being the case, NR would not be a problem for the conservative.

To see how NR is related to concepts, or conceptual activity, consider the following. First, consider Prinz's suggestion that concepts are detection mechanisms. If he's correct, then we can make the case that NR is conceptual (and so, cognitive) as follows. NR is a feature, or property, of the image. Much as the redness of a ball is detected by a subject's <Red> concept, the NR aspect of a mental image would be detected by a subject's <NR> concept. Thus, *if* Prinz

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be possible, specifically when virtual reality advances a significant degree. I imagine this will probably be a common occurrence for those who use the technology.

[101] NR also changes the horizon in lucid dreams. Once one becomes aware that one is dreaming, NR is part of how the environment is presented; one then has a whole set of possible interactions one does not have in waking life.

is correct about concepts, then we can see how mental imagery includes at least one cognitive aspect. But if this is the case, then unless NR can be based in sense experience, mental imagery includes cognitive aspects. And so, appeals to mental imagery in answering contrast arguments do not avoid cognitive phenomenology.[102]

This consideration, however, only succeeds if Prinz is correct about concepts. Let us consider, then, other reasons that apply more generally. Here it helps to recall from the previous chapter what I referred to as the 'as-structure' in which things are presented to a subject. Much of the time, this structure presents things under a conceptual categorization. Often, when objects are presented under a conceptual categorization, the categorization itself is implicit in the experience. Thus, as I look about the room, though I see a desk, and a chair, I need not explicitly think to myself, "That's a desk, that's a chair," and so on. Rather, I just have an implicit understanding of what is presented to me. A similar situation occurs here. When images flash in one's stream of consciousness, there is often no explicit characterization such as "This image is not real." Rather, NR is just part of the presentation.

However, it is open to the conservative to point out that the as-structure need not be conceptual. This is a point I made in the previous chapter. Thus, it is open to the conservative to claim that NR is non-conceptual, and so do not pose a problem.

Whether NR is conceptual of course depends on one's view of concepts. But there is at least some reason to think that NR is conceptual in the way I understand concepts here. Consider that NR is the negation of *real*.[103] Thus, NR depends on the subject being able to make a distinction between how the world really is, and how it is not. Making this distinction seems to

[102] Below I provide an argument against the idea that the <NR> concept has a sensory basis.
[103] At first this might seem like an artifact of the terminology I'm using, but I don't think this is the case. It seems to me that whatever term we use, <Fiction>, <Fake>, <Imaginary> etc., it will end up being analyzed in terms of negation. For instance, if something is *merely* imaginary, then it is *not* real.

be a form of conceptual activity, or at least one that relies on having certain concepts, perhaps <Negation>, and <Real>, or <Actual> and <Possible>.[104] If this, or something like it, is correct, we can also see why NR cannot have a sensory basis. NR includes negation, which as was mentioned above, is a narrow concept, one that plausibly lacks a sensory basis.[105]

Finally, consider how NR plays a role in planning– a form of conceptual activity. Having certain concepts allows one to interact with objects in various ways. For instance, having the concept <Hammer> includes knowing how hammers can be used. Similarly, NR allows one to interact with mental images in various ways. One might actively use mental imagery to form plans for possible action. Plausibly, the NR component is one way in which the subject can know that she can try various options without consequence.

So far I have been discussing the NR component in terms of visual imagery, but there is also an analog that comes with auditory imagery. When one hears one's internal voice, one immediately recognizes what it is. Not only is it one's own, but it is an *internal* voice. There is a sense of ownership, and an implicit indication of the source from which it comes. It is, perhaps, easier to grasp the NR component of internal audition by looking at cases in which it breaks down. Such a case is most readily found in certain forms of schizophrenia. Some schizophrenics have auditory hallucinations in which the voices seem real, *and* seem to come from within (e.g., Copolov et al. 2003, McCarthy-Jones et al. 2012). Auditory imagery, too, then has an NR component.

In addition to how real a voice may seem, some schizophrenics hear *other* people's voices (Stephane et al. 2003). What this points to is another way in which internal audition is presented to the subject, one mentioned in passing above. Internal audition is presented as *mine,*

[104] All of these concepts are in the classes of concepts discussed in *§2*. They are either narrow, theoretical, or philosophical, and so each has a phenomenological quality.
[105] See footnote 90 above.

or *other*.[106] And both of these manners of presentation alter the horizon implicit in one's experience. When one hears a voice (or voices) in one's head, the forms of interaction one can expect to have are much different than in those cases of genuine audition. If one hears a voice that is *not* one's own, it may seem as if one can interact with it as one would with an other. This is not the case, however, when one recognizes the inner voice as one's own.

With respect to NR, one might grant that the non-real aspect is conceptual, but claim that there is in fact a sensory basis for it. If a sensory basis can be found, then it may be possible to ground that aspect of mental imagery in sensory imagery after all. But this is problematic. We have already seen that if NR includes negation, it includes a narrow concept, one not grounded in sense experience. But what's more, the only things that we can perceive are those things that exist in space and time. In the case of mental imagery, NR is a property of the image. But non-real things (be they objects, or properties) do not exist in space and time, and so cannot have perceptual phenomenology. Thus, we cannot form the concept of NR from experiences of *reality*. The non-real presentation is something that is strictly conceptual. If this is correct, then there is a cognitive phenomenal character that is not based in sensory phenomenology. And, what's more, this would mean that mental imagery is not strictly sensory in its phenomenology. There is at least one cognitive element.

But there is more than just one cognitive element involved in mental imagery. We can see other possible conceptual elements when we realize that, as with concepts, images come in different forms. Again, assume the conservative thesis that cognitive episodes always have associated imagery. This, in itself, does not in anyway say what *sorts* of images they are. When thinking about <Democracy>, for example, one might have a visual image of people in line, waiting to vote. But this image can be of at least two sorts. It can be a *memory* of a time when

[106] When it is presented as mine, there is a sense of ownership.

one was waiting in line to vote, *or* it can be a new image, one conjured up for the occasion. But then there are at least two ways images can be presented in the stream of consciousness, as-memory, or as-non-memory.

Let us focus, for the moment, on memory images. Implicit in such an image is that it is an image of the *past*, as something that *really* occurred at some point in time.[107] There is, then, a temporal element to some mental imagery. And just as there can be a *past* temporal aspect, there might also be future, or present aspects. However, not all images will have a temporal element, as some images might be conjured up for only one occasion, and not implicitly represent the future, past, or present. If, for instance, I say "Stab nail at Italian bats," you might have fleeting images of bats, or nails stabbing bats. This need not be an image you have ever experienced, formed as part of a creative endeavor, or expect to experience in the future, and so there may not be any temporal aspect to it. But in any case, at least some images will have an implicit temporal aspect, one that modifies the phenomenal character of the image.[108]

Aside from memory, and temporal aspects, images may also have modal elements. Consider times when one contemplates what one wants to have as a career. One might have an image that, given one's circumstances, is not *possible* (e.g., being a starship captain on an interstellar spacecraft), or one that is possible (e.g., being a teacher). Again, this modal element alters the phenomenal character, and is conceptual. In fact, modal concepts are narrow concepts, and so we have already seen that these do not have a sensory basis. The modal aspects can also be combined with temporal aspects, and so we can have more complex presentations. Again,

[107] For ease of explanation, I will only focus on real memories. The existence of false memories does not pose a problem for what I am saying in the text. In fact, it might even strengthen the case, as it would show that images can have the presentation of *as-memory* without being a real memory. This would seem to show that the memory aspect of images is distinct from the images themselves.

[108] We can add a further wrinkle. For those of us who remember our dreams, sometimes images will appear in the stream of consciousness that come from dreams. In such cases, there is another conceptual element, one that indicates the kind of image it was originally, a dream image, or an image based in actual experience.

consider the career example. When I think about being a teacher as a possible career, the images that appear in the stream of consciousness are presented *as-possibly-future*, whereas an image of myself as ten years older, and an international spy, are presented *as-merely-possible-future*. I might imagine this, but I know it is a mere fantasy, something that will not come to pass.

One might object that even if mental images have these properties, the image need not *present* this to the subject. After all, objects have certain properties that are not themselves presented to subjects. For example, when one looks at an apple, the apple has a core, but the core itself it not presented to the subject as she looks at the apple.

As a reply to this, we can, again, appeal to a self-knowledge argument. When one has an image appear in the stream of consciousness, one can have immediate self-knowledge of whether, for example, the image is a memory, or a new image.[109] Or, one knows immediately whether the images that appear represent the future, present, or have no temporal element at all.

The general point, then, is that visual images seem to involve various conceptual elements when they appear in the stream of consciousness.[110] But if this is right, then when the conservative appeals to mental imagery in trying to respond to certain arguments (e.g., contrast arguments), she implicitly relies on other cognitive elements, which themselves have a phenomenal quality, and lack a sensory basis.

Let me summarize the point of this section. As we have seen, conservatives seek to explain away cognitive phenomenology by appeal to familiar types of phenomenology, such as sensory phenomenology. Importantly, they claim that there is nothing more to the phenomenology of cognitive episodes than having certain verbal, or visual imagery. And because

[109] Or, if we consider false memories, then the subject can have an immediate belief that the image is a memory, or not.

[110] More would have to be said to show whether these same aspects apply to auditory imagery, or whether auditory imagery has other aspects.

this imagery can be wholly explained in terms of sensory phenomenology, understanding something, or thinking about a concept, is nothing over and above the sensory phenomenology. But if what I say in this section is correct, then the manner in which visual, and auditory imagery is presented to the subject implicitly involves certain conceptual elements, which are themselves not based in sense experience. What this means is that there *is* something over and above sensory phenomenology in mental imagery itself. Mental imagery thus includes cognitive phenomenology.

***§4. Cognitive phenomenology and phenomenal intentionality***

I want to end this chapter by briefly explaining how the views of the last two chapters are related. Recall that the theses of the last chapter were that there is a kind of intentionality grounded in phenomenal character (phenomenal grounding), and that *all* conscious mental states have their intentionality grounded by phenomenality (basicness). The main examples of the previous chapter were sensory. And at the end of the last chapter I argued that regardless of one's view of cognitive phenomenology, phenomenal grounding is true of the cognitive domain. Now we can see the exact details of how phenomenality grounds the directedness of a state. Concepts have a proprietary phenomenal character, and so what a state is directed toward (i.e., which concept) is grounded in phenomenal character. This is, perhaps, most easily seen when we consider the argument from self-knowledge. According to that argument, we have immediate self-knowledge about the content of a conscious thought in virtue of the phenomenal character of the concept. Immediate self-knowledge, in this context, is a kind of implicit understanding. And whenever one implicitly understands, one implicitly understands something in particular. This something is determined by phenomenality.

Let me also note that the main case in the previous chapter was that of seeing a green apple. This example is not *merely* sensory, as it contains a conceptual element, i.e., classifying an object as an apple, with a particular color. Thus, if the arguments given in this chapter apply to all kinds of concepts, and not just certain classes, then cognitive phenomenology is part of perceptual experiences as well.

### *§. Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to establish the existence of cognitive phenomenology. Cognitive phenomenology is a proprietary phenomenology, one not based in sense experience. In the first half of this paper I provided new considerations in favor of this thesis. In the second half of the chapter, I aimed to expand the scope of cognitive phenomenology by arguing against a fundamental assumption made by all parties in the cognitive phenomenology debate. In the next chapter, I develop an account of empathy, and show how phenomenality is an essential part of the phenomenon. I thus draw on the accounts of the first two chapters in developing the account. Insofar as empathy concerns how we understand others, phenomenality is thus an essential part of how this occurs.[111]

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# CHAPTER III
# Varieties of Empathic Experience:
# A phenomenological account of empathy

## *§. Introduction*

A primary component of human life includes, indeed requires, that we interact with others. What makes these interactions possible is that we are able to understand what goes on in the minds of others. As you read this, for instance, you understand that I am *intending* to convey something to you. I tell you a story, and as you scrunch your eyebrows, and nod your head, I see that you're interested. Or perhaps you tell me that your father died, and you start to cry. I not only understand that you're sad, but also the reason why. This is but a small list of daily interactions that involve comprehending the mental life of another.

Though each of these examples involves a different kind of mental state (e.g., intending, being interested, and feeling sad), and different ways in which we understand those experiences (e.g., perceptual, and cognitive), I want to propose that they are all instances of a general category of experience, that of *empathy*. If we accept this claim, then we are faced with the following question: What makes all of these examples ones of empathy?

As many have pointed out (e.g., Zahavi 2012, Batson 2009, Preston and de Waal 2002, Goldman 1993), the literature on empathy contains many distinct, yet related definitions (see *table 1* for a sample). And so we cannot hope to answer our question by appealing to a standard definition, because there isn't one.

As we can see from *table 1*, the definitions themselves require further elaboration. For instance, it isn't clear what the "cognitive and emotional processes that bind people together in various sorts of relationships" are supposed to be (Eslinger 1998). Nor is it clear how experience and understanding others are related, as discussed by Decety and Lamm (2006).

***Table 1:*** A sampling of various definitions of empathy, spanning multiple fields; e.g., philosophy, social neuroscience, cognitive science, and psychology.[112]

| | |
|---|---|
| Karsten Stueber (2006) | *Reenactive Empathy*: "…using our cognitive and deliberative capacities in order to reenact or imitate in our own mind the thought processes of the other person." (21) |
| Jean Decety and Claus Lamm (2006) | "Empathy is the ability to experience and understand what others feel without confusion between oneself and others." (1146) |
| Stephanie D. Preston and Frans B.M. de Waal (2002) | *Empathy*: "Subject's state results from the attended perception of the object's state." (4)<br>*Cognitive Empathy*: "Subject represents state of object through top-down processes." (4) |
| Paul J. Eslinger (1998) | "Empathy refers to the cognitive and emotional processes that bind people together in various kinds of relationships that permit sharing of experiences as well as understanding of others." (193) |
| William Ickes (1993) | Empathic understanding: "…involves the ability to accurately infer the thoughts and feelings of another person." (591) |
| Alvin Goldman (1993) | "Paradigm cases of empathy…consist first of taking the perspective of another person, that is, imaginatively assuming one or more of the other person's mental states." (351) |

But even if these issues are cleared up, there remains the following difficulty: the definitions themselves differ in substantive ways. Ickes (1993) claims that empathy is an inferential process, whereas Goldman (1993, 2006) thinks of empathy as a process of simulation. Different still, Preston and de Waal (2002) claim that empathy is perceptual. And so it isn't even clear that the same phenomenon is being discussed.[113] We thus see that the question we asked with respect to our examples arises again for the various ways empathy is characterized: What makes all of these characterizations ones of empathy?

It is, of course, possible to merely deny that all of these definitions are talking about the same phenomenon, or that most of the definitions just get the phenomenon wrong. This, however, is not a course I am interested in pursuing, as there does not appear to be a principled reason for favoring one view over another. Rather, like the examples from the opening paragraph, I think each of the characterizations provided in *table 1*, as well as many others, are

[112] This list is not exhaustive. There appear to be as many definitions of empathy as there are people who study it. For an overview of some of the different uses, see Batson (2009).

[113] There is also a question about what kind of states are in the proper domain of empathy. Stueber (2006) characterizes empathy as pertaining to thought processes. Eslinger (1998), on the other hand, includes emotions as well.

all characterizations of the same thing, empathy. Put differently, they are all varieties of empathic experience.

The purpose of this chapter is to propose an answer to the following question: In virtue of what are all of these characterizations instances of *empathy*? Briefly, my answer is that empathy is a kind of intentional experience, characterized by a formal structure. The structure is *formal* in the sense that it is general, not specific to any one particular experience. Because empathy is characterized by a general structure, there will be various ways it can be instantiated. It is my hope that once the account is explained, we will see why many of the diverse characterizations of empathy qualify as particular instantiations of the same thing– empathic experience. In the final section of the chapter I will test the proposed account by applying it to various conceptions of empathy.[114] Along the way I will also be applying the results of the previous two chapters to the account of empathy I propose below. Thus, we will come to see how phenomenality is a crucial component of empathic experience. Empathy, then, can here be seen as a test case for applying the views developed in this dissertation.

The chapter will proceed as follows. I begin with a brief discussion of my method. I propose to identify the formal structure of empathy through *phenomenological analysis*. In *§1* I explain what this sort of analysis entails, as well as my reason for using it. In *§2* I give my positive account. As this is the main topic of the chapter, this section will constitute the bulk of

[114] Before moving on, it is important to note that this idea, that empathy is a form of intentional experience, is not new. It has been assumed by Edmund Husserl (1952/1989), Edith Stein (1917/1989), and others. My contribution is thus not in viewing empathy in this manner, but in spelling out empathy's intentional structure in explicit detail. Yet even here I am not starting from the ground up. My own view owes much to David W. Smith's discussion of empathy in his 1989 work, *The Circle of Acquaintance: Perception, consciousness, and empathy*. The main proposal of the present chapter is thus best understood as building off of this earlier work. However, this chapter is not a mere restatement of Smith's view, as I discuss certain things that Smith chose to leave aside, and I explore issues that were implicit in his discussion, though not explicitly brought out. As I proceed, I will be sure to point out these differences.

the discussion. In *§3* I then proceed to test the account by applying it to common conceptions of empathy.

***§1. The phenomenological method***

The approach in this chapter will be *phenomenological*. It is worth taking a moment to review this method, as well as the motivation for employing it in the present context. Recall that phenomenology is the study of conscious experience as it is given in the first person perspective. In phenomenological analysis we reflect on types of experiences with the aim of discerning how such experiences are structured. That is, experiences are complex wholes, composed of different parts that are related to one another in certain ways. The aim of phenomenological analysis is to identify these parts, and their relations.

Essential to most kinds of conscious experience is that they are *intentional*– that is, they are directed toward, or about something. Intentionality is itself structured, and as Smith (2013) points out, "The central structure of an experience is its intentionality…" (1)[115] In this chapter we reflect on one particular type of experience, empathy, with the aim of discerning the structure of empathic experience. It is, I claim, this structure that characterizes empathy.

Because empathy is studied across a variety of disciplines, it might be wondered why a *phenomenological* approach to empathy is appropriate. One might argue, for instance, that a phenomenological approach is unnecessary, and that it cannot tell us anything over and above what an empirical examination of the phenomenon could tell us. For example, Preston and de Waal (2002) begin their paper by acknowledging disagreement in the literature about the exact nature of empathy, and propose to locate the ultimate and proximate mechanisms of empathy in

[115] For discussion of the structure of intentionality see the introduction to this dissertation. I briefly review the structure below.

order to help settle the disagreement. Given that there are empirical investigations such as these, why, it might be asked, aren't such approaches sufficient?

Suggestions such as these, however, are too quick, as they must already assume an answer to the question we're exploring in this chapter. For before we are able to find the neural basis for empathy, or at which point in a child's development one becomes empathic, or which animals are capable of empathy, we first need to have a clear conception of *what* we are investigating. As Brentano (1982/1995) puts it, investigating these issues before having a clear concept of what we're investigating is like "[a] physiologist without anatomical knowledge." (10)

Because empathy is a type of experience, determining the nature of this experience is a task for which phenomenology is primed to accomplish. For it is by reflecting on those experiences that we take to be empathic, whereby we can locate the essence of the phenomenon. Thus, the reason why an empirical investigation into the mechanisms of empathy does not preclude a phenomenological approach is because phenomenology is *prior* to these other empirical investigations.[116] And so, far from being unnecessary, a phenomenological approach to empathy is needed to set the stage for later investigations.

However, one might also object to my approach on functionalist grounds. Functionalists define a mind as a functional system, the states of which are individuated by the causal roles the state has to inputs, behavioral outputs, and relations to other states. Proponents of functionalism might object to a phenomenological approach on the grounds that we ought to view empathy as a capacity with causal properties, rather than as a kind of experience.

[116] See also Brentano (1982/1995), pp. 78-79 for another place in which he argues that phenomenology must come prior to experimental work.

The task for the functionalist, then, would be for her to explain what kind of capacity empathy is supposed to be. Here, I believe, the functionalist runs into the same problem as was pointed out above. If we look at *table 1*, we see that many of the characterizations refer to empathy as a capacity, or an ability. But as has already been pointed out, each characterization highlights a different kind of capacity. We are thus left with the question of why each different capacity is one of empathy. If the functionalist is to prefer one capacity to another, she must provide a principled reason. However, it is not clear that such a reason is forthcoming.[117]

### *§2. The formal structure of empathy*

According to my account, empathy is a species of intentional experience in which a subject understands the experience of another subject, without confusion between her own, and the other's experience. There is much to be explained here, and indeed, this explanation will constitute a majority of this chapter. However, before we can specifically focus on empathy, some preliminaries are first required. As mentioned, empathy has a structure, one that can be instantiated in a variety of ways. Yet the empathic structure is itself an instantiation of a more general kind of structure, that of intentionality. And so to better understand empathy, we must first start with a general discussion of the kind of thing that empathy is, namely, a form of intentional experience.

#### *§2.1 Intentionality and forms of intentional experience*

As I have already discussed this structure twice in this dissertation (see the *§1* of the introduction, and *§1* of Chapter 1) I will just re-present the structure with an example below it, and make a few quick notes:

[117] Further, even if both a functionalist and phenomenological approach can both provide an account of empathy that answers the primary question in this chapter, there is still the question of why we *ought* to prefer a functionalist approach to a phenomenological one.

Subject–Phenomenally–Act-type–Content–Object (when actual)
Background: Beliefs about present experience
Horizon: Possible future experiences

I–phenomenally–see–this wax red apple–[wax red apple]
Background: e.g., I believe I am in a wax museum.
Horizon: e.g., What will happen if I bite into this apple.

This is the formal structure of intentional experience that I have assumed in this dissertation. Before moving on to the formal structure of empathy, let me first note what I mean by claiming that empathy is a *species* of intentional experience.

On the present view, every experience will instantiate the above intentional structure, and so in a sense there is something which is common to all experiences. Yet we can still distinguish more specific kinds, or types of experiences, what Husserl (1900-1901/1970) calls 'species of intention.' (96) There are, for example, perceptual experiences, cognitive experiences, emotional experiences, and experiences of acting. In each case what makes the experience the type of experience it is will be determined by a modification of one or more of the formal parts of the intentional structure. Thus, in cognitive or perceptual experiences, for instance, what is modified is the generic act-type. That is, I *think* about an apple, or I *see* an apple.

Notice that while we can distinguish different types of intentional experience, these types are still not necessarily of a specific experience. There is still a level of abstraction, or generality, above a particular experience. To see this, consider the following:

*Intentionality*:
Subject–Phenomenally–Act-type–Content–Object (when actual)
Background
Horizon

*Perceptual Experience*:
I–phenomenally–perceive–this object–[object]
Background: Beliefs about the object and environment.
Horizon: Possibilities of future experiences with the object.

*Specific Perceptual Experience*:
I–phenomenally–see–this wax red apple–[wax red apple]
Background: Beliefs about environment, wax figures, and wax museums.
Horizon: Possible future experiences with objects in the environment.

***Figure 1.***

Given that there are different perceptual modalities, perceptual experience will come in a variety of ways. It is at this mid-level where I claim the formal structure of empathy is found. Empathy is a 'species of intention.' Empathy instantiates a general form; one of intentionality, yet parts of the formal structure are modified in a way specific to empathy. And like perceptual or cognitive experiences, empathy can be further specified, thus allowing for varieties of empathic experiences. It is to this formal structure we now turn for a closer inspection.

***§2.2 Self and other: The constitution of internal life***

In order to approach the structure of empathic experience let us start by considering the object of empathy. Crucial to empathy is that it is *other oriented*. Despite the wide array of definitions of empathy, this seems to be a point of agreement (see, for example, *table 1*). Empathic experiences are about an other, or others. But empathy is not about just any aspect of the other, such as how tall she is, or the color of her hair. Rather, empathy is concerned with the *conscious mental life* of the other. It is concerned with the other's experience (again, see *table 1*). I might see how large an object is, but unless I see that object *as one that has an experience*, my experience is not one of empathy, but a mere perception of an object in the external world. In

order for an experience to qualify as empathy, the experience must have, as its object, the conscious internal states of the other. Notice also that this puts a constraint on the content of empathic experience. The other must be presented *as* an other.[118]

By clarifying the nature of this object, the other, we will also begin to describe the content of empathic experience– that is, the way the other is presented in empathy.[119] What, then, is the other? For our purposes it is not necessary to have a metaphysical account. What is needed is an explication of the other's internal life, as it is constituted in lived experience. Towards this end it helps to recognize what the other is being contrasted with: the self. For the other is a self that is not me. And because the other is like myself, we can get a general characterization of the other's internal states by first reflecting on our own internal lives.

Begin with the observation that I have a location in space and time. It is this location from which I am oriented toward the world. It is from this location where I have experiences. I will here follow Husserl (1952/1989,) and Edith Stein (1917/1989) in referring to this as the *zero point*. Husserl describes the zero point as follows:

> All spatial being necessarily appears in such a way that it appears either nearer or farther, above or below, right or left…The Body then has, for its particular Ego, the unique distinction of bearing in itself the zero point of all these orientations. One of its spatial points, even if not an actually seen one, is always characterized in the mode of the ultimate central here: that is, a here which has no other here outside itself, in relation to which it would be a "there." It is thus all things of the surrounding world possess an orientation to the Body, just as, accordingly, all expressions of orientation imply this relation. (166)

The zero point thus functions as an index. As such, my zero point is different from yours, much as the term "here" changes based on who utters it.

The zero point orients me toward the world in various ways. As Husserl points out, the zero point is intimately tied to my body. It is, we might say, *embodied*. Embodiment brings with

[118] More on this below. But let me note that the *as-other* presentation is grounded phenomenally.
[119] For a full discussion of empathic content, see *§2.4* below.

it a number of features, each of which orients the subject with the world, and thus helps constitute a subject's experiences.

In this respect, consider a point observed by Merleau-Ponty (1945/2014), "The contour of my body is a border that ordinary spatial relations do not cross. This is because the body's parts relate to each other in a peculiar way: they are not laid out side by side, but rather envelop each other." (100) So the body is a dividing line between myself and the world. Indeed, he goes on to explain that it is in virtue of this separation– that between my body and the world– that objects in the world can be given, or presented, to us. (103) The body, that is, constitutes the ground upon which objects in space-time can be presented.

The contours of the body are not the only feature that helps to orient us with the world. For each of us also has a *body schema*, an implicit knowledge of how our bodies are presently arranged. My left hand is resting on my right. A particular point on my back is tender. I know these things directly, without the need for observation or inference. It is partly in virtue of this schema, and segregation from the world, that we can be given objects as being on, or next to one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2014, pp. 103). And having objects given to us in this way is part of our experience, part of how we are oriented toward the world. Objects are next to or on top of each other. Some are closer to me than others. One supports my weight as I lean against it.

Further, it is part of having a body of the kind that I have that it receives information from the world by way of different senses. The body is thus a bearer of sensations (Husserl, 1952/1989, pp. 168). These sensations come together to form a large part of my experience. They form a unity. I taste an apple not as an un-unified collection of sensations, e.g., sweetness

disjoint from juiciness, disjoint from crunchiness, but as a part of one experience.[120] The point at which they come together is what I am calling the zero point. As Stein notes:

> This zero point is not to be geometrically localized at one point in my physical body; nor is it the same for all data. It is localized in the head for visual data and in mid-body for tactile data. Thus, whatever refers to the "I" has no distance from the zero point, and all that is given at a distance from the zero point is also given at a distance from the "I." (43)

Notice how Stein relates the "I," the subject of intentionality, with the zero point. They are at one and the same place. Thus, part of being oriented toward the world is to be directed toward one thing or another. It is to have experiences of various kinds.

Importantly, my body is given to me in a different manner than how other objects are given to me. Though it is true that, as with other objects, my body is given to me by way of outer perception, through one or multiple senses, it is not *merely* given in this way. As Merleau-Ponty (1945/2014) explains:

> [M]y own body defies exploration and always appears to me from the same angle. Its permanence is not a permanence in the world, but a permanence on my side. To say that my body is always near to me or always there for me is to say that it is never truly in front of me, that I cannot spread it out under my gaze, that it remains on the margins of all of my perceptions, and that it is *with* me. (93)

What is being pointed out here is an asymmetry between the way we become acquainted with other objects, and how we are acquainted with our own bodies.[121]

So far, we have explicitly considered the body's role in constituting our everyday experience. But my internal life is not merely limited to sensations and bodily awareness, I also have emotions, and thoughts about the world. I also have thoughts about my emotions, and thoughts about my thoughts. I intend actions, and recall life experiences. And with all of these species of intention, when I experience them I have an *immediate access* to them. It is 'immediate' in the sense that if I feel sad, then I do not need to infer anything based on my

[120] It is presented as a *taste* object, similar to the kinds of sense modality specific objects discussed in Chapter 1, *§5*.
[121] For similar comments, see Stein (1917/1989), pp. 41-48, especially pp. 43.

behavior, I know it directly. It is just given to me. Similar considerations apply to memories and other mental modes.[122]

All of these things, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, memories, intentions, and bodily awareness, bind together to form my current experience. Each of these will find a different place in the intentional structure elaborated above. And when each is considered as its own experience, they will all have a specific kind of intentional structure. When I see a dog, I not only see *this* dog, but I also have an occurrent memory of *my* dog, which itself triggers an emotion, and modifies my experience of seeing *this* dog. Thus the dog is presented to me differently than if I never had a dog of my own. And as I bend down to pet this dog, I feel the weight in my knees, and I shift to balance myself on the balls of my feet. I remember seeing this dog in the past, and operating in the background is my belief that the dog is friendly. This in turn shapes the horizon of my experience, for instance, that if I were to pet it, its tail would wag. It is these kinds of features in the horizon that help to shape empathic experience.

To sum up thus far: *I* am an embodied subject that is located in space and time. My location, the zero point, orients me towards things in the world. Part of how I experience the world is shaped by my memories and emotions, my goals and my background beliefs, and my bodily awareness. Importantly, one of the things I am oriented towards are other subjects: others who appear to be just like me. I see another's body, and I when I see it I do not merely see it as a material object, which it is, but I see it as a material object with a psychology, a psychic life, a zero point. Further, when we see another person, we do not *first* see a material body, and then *infer* a psychic life. Rather, when we see another's body, we see it *as a* body, and not merely as a material object. According to this view, *body* just is a thing with a zero point. Others are thus given to us *qua* conscious beings who are not us. And there is something it is like to be given an

[122] For further discussion, see Chapter 2 *§2.3* of this dissertation.

other in this way. That is, there is a phenomenal quality that makes the state one of being *about* an other. This, at a bare minimum, is the content of seeing an other.

To fill in some more detail about the content, consider that the givenness of the other includes, among other things, certain ways we can interact with it. Compare, for instance, seeing a guardrail on the highway, and seeing a human being. You cannot ask a guardrail for directions. And again, this is something you know immediately. No inference is required. Similarly, you know immediately that there is at least a possibility of communication with a human being. Seeing an other *qua* other thus brings with it a certain set of possible future experiences, that is, a horizon.

Importantly, though the other is like me, the way the inner life of the other is given to me is drastically different than how my own inner life is given to me. Indeed, this character of givenness is part of the phenomenal character of empathic experience. There are two ways in which this difference occurs. The first concerns the *way* in which experiences are given. Our own experiences are given to us directly, through an inner awareness. The experience of others is *not* given in this manner. In some cases the other's experience is given through perception. In other cases, the other's experience is given through imagination, or inference. But in none of these cases is the other's experience given in inner awareness, as one's own experience is given.

Second, there is a difference in the phenomenal character of how an other's experience is given to me. To see this suppose that you and I are both looking at one another. Through empathy I understand that you are situated in the world, that you have a spatial perspective, and I even know what you're looking at– me. Yet I do not experience your experience *as you do*. Your experience is of looking at *me*. My experience is of looking at *you*, and it is infused with certain content: I see you *as* having a position and *as* having a visual presentation in front of you. But I

do not experience your actual visual presentation. If I did then I would not see *you*, but myself, which does not occur.

Edith Stein referred to this kind of phenomenal character as being given *non-primordially*– where the notion of *primordial* giveness means being actually or originally given, as would be experienced first personally during the actual experience.[123] Yet when I see a disgusted expression on your face, I do not feel disgusted as you do, though I understand that you are disgusted. Your disgust is given as belonging to your experience, not to mine.

This notion, that your experience is not given to me in the same manner as it is given to you, is crucial for empathy. For it is at least partly in virtue of this difference that the subject is able to understand the other's experience as belonging to the other, and not to herself. Recall, it is crucial to empathy that it is other oriented. If I experienced your experience *as* you do, then you would drop out altogether, and my experience would cease to be other oriented. It would cease to be empathy. Thus, insofar as phenomenal character grounds what the experience is directed towards, it is an integral part of empathy.

Before moving on, it is important to note the scope of empathic experience, as some claim that it is merely directed at another's emotions or thoughts (see *table 1*). It is true that when I see you frown, I see that you're sad (an emotion), but there does not appear to be a principled reason for thinking that *only* emotions, or only thoughts *and* emotions, can be given in empathic experience. And indeed, our observations above indicate that this is false. For in seeing an other as an other, we are already given non-emotional, non-cognitive content about the other's experience, e.g., having a zero point and all that comes with it. It is through empathy that I understand you to have a zero point in space. And as has been discussed, this zero point is composed of both sensory, and bodily awareness. This is why I claim that empathy concerns all

[123] See Stein (1917/1989), pp. 7-11.

kinds internal states, whatever they may be. My account is thus more liberal than those who restrict empathy to only certain kinds of mental states.

To summarize, the object of empathic experience is the other's internal life. The other is one like myself (in relevant respects), one who has an internal life, one who is oriented towards the world in various ways. It is crucial to empathy that the other is given in a certain way. That is, it is crucial that empathy have a certain content. First, the other needs to be given *as* an other, and not as a mere object. And second, the other's internal life is given non-primordially, not as *my* experience, but as the *other's* experience. This is crucial, because it is due to the character of givenness (it's non-primordiality) that allows the subject to understand the experience of the other as belonging to the other, and not to herself. Importantly, these manners of givenness are constituted phenomenally. The way each aspect is given has a specific kind of phenomenal quality. This, then, is one part of the formal structure of empathic experience. Let us now turn to the second essential part of this structure, the mental act-type involved– *understanding*.

### *§2.3 Empathic understanding*

Earlier in the chapter I characterized empathy as an experience of *understanding*. We are now in a position to characterize this kind of understanding, which I will here out refer to as *empathic understanding*.[124] What I am calling empathic understanding is a combination of two parts of the intentional structure: (i) the content, and (ii) the act-type. As a preliminary characterization, let us say that when a subject empathically understands, a certain kind of

[124] There are two things to note here. First, a terminological issue. I call this '*empathic* understanding' because I do not intend that the discussion in the text be thought of as an analysis of understanding full stop. Further, I do not intend to use 'understand' in a way that *necessarily* indicates any kind of high-level cognitive achievement. I note this, because if 'understand' is taken to indicate such an achievement, then some less intelligent species may not be capable of empathy, which I do not want to rule out *a priori*. Indeed, I think that other species are capable of empathy. I thank Lori Gruen for alerting me to this potential concern. Second, the idea that empathy involves a kind of understanding is not unique to my view; Stein (1917/1989), Smith (1989), and others have emphasized the importance of this state. The discussion below differs from these earlier discussions in the particular way that I describe the nature of empathic understanding.

content is tokened in the subject's intentional structure, what I will call *empathic content*.[125] It is in virtue of empathic content that the subject comprehends something about the other's experience. This, roughly, is empathic understanding.

Though one empathically understands in virtue of empathic content, an act-type must be included, as content is not free floating. Rather, content must be presented by way of some kind of act-type. Put differently, the act-type is the mode through which one tokens content. And, conversely, act-types, in general, are always ones that present a content. There is no judging without judging that something is (or is not) the case. The act-type and content are thus interdependent. They remain distinct, however, in that the same act-type can present different contents, and the same content can be presented by different act-types.[126]

Though the character of empathic understanding will be modified by the specific empathic content, and act-type instanced, there are at least two features of empathic understanding that will be present, regardless of the specifics.[127] First, note that insofar as empathic content is presented, the subject will have certain beliefs about the other, and such beliefs will dispose her to behave in particular ways.[128] This phenomenon occurs with any kind of content. If I see my favorite vase precariously resting on the edge of a table, certain background beliefs will be activated (e.g., the vase might fall, the vase is fragile), and so I may be disposed to move it. Similarly if I understand that another is angry with me. In such a case I will be disposed to approach the person with caution, whereas if I didn't understand this, then I would not be so disposed. It need not be the case, however, that understanding that another is

[125] I discuss empathic content in *§2.3.1.2* below.
[126] On these points see Husserl (1900-1901/1970), vol.2, pp. 119-122, 128.
[127] As I will explain below, I do not think that empathy requires any one particular kind of act-type. Rather, there are various act-types which allow for the presentation of empathic content. More on this below.
[128] Whether these beliefs are occurrent may depend on the act-type, and the context in which the experience takes place.

angry with me be the central intentional state. As I see the face of the other, I see that she is angry with me, and I react in certain ways, where these reactions need not be done consciously or deliberatively.

Second, note that in general, understanding is an epistemic notion, one closely linked with knowledge. And so it is reasonable to wonder whether, and in what respect, empathic understanding must be *true*. I will say more about this below, after the discussion of empathic content. For now, let us note that a subject's empathic understanding must be accurate in at least *some* respects. However, it will be possible for one's empathic understanding to be accurate in some respects, and inaccurate in others. Rather than completely undermining empathy, such inaccuracies will only undermine certain kinds of empathic experience.

### *§2.3.1 Empathic content*

#### *§2.3.1.1 Why empathic content is required*

Empathic content is a species, or kind, of content. Recall that, in general, content is the full manner in which the world is presented as being a certain way. Empathic content concerns presenting particular kinds of things in the world, namely, others. Thus, what characterizes the class of empathic content is that it is other-oriented; it presents others *as* others. Here we see a correspondence between the content, and object, in empathic experience, as the empathic intentional object also concerns others.[129] Before detailing some kinds of empathic content, let me first note why this kind of content is crucial for empathy.

[129] Note, however, that this correspondence need not be satisfied. One might see a person, and yet fail to see this person *as* a person. Rather, one might see her merely as a material object. This would be a case of empathic failure. There are other ways empathic failure might occur. For instance, it might be the case that I am presented with a wax figure as a person. Again, in such a case, there is a mismatch between the content and the object.

Suppose that I see an object. This object happens to be a human being, but I do not realize this. Rather, at first glance, I do not see it as a human, but believe it to be a wax figure.[130] I see the object *as* a wax figure. Because I do not see it as a human being, or as a living creature at all, I am not presented with an object that has internal states. Because of this, I see this wax figure as a mere material object, not as an other. But now suppose that after a moment I realize my mistake. This object in front of me is no wax figure, but a person. Immediately, I understand that this is a thing with an internal life.[131] The way in which the figure is presented to me alters. In this case, the change that occurs is not a change in the object, or in the perceptual mode (i.e., sight). Rather, what changes is the *way* the object is presented to me. There is a change in content.[132]

The point is that without this kind of content, our perceptions and thoughts are not about others, but about mere material, or natural objects. And as was discussed previously, empathy is essentially *other* oriented. Without the other, there is no empathy. Empathic content gives us the other, and so *ex hypothesi*, without such content there is no empathy either. Empathic content is thus an essential part of empathic experience.

Yet it could be objected that while this might be a plausible account of why *perceptual* accounts of empathy must implicitly rely on this kind of content, accounts that appeal to other act-types, such as imagining or feeling, do not require this.

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[130] I borrow this type of example from Smith (1989), pp. 128. Smith's version is an inverted case of one originally given by Husserl (1900-1901/1970), vol.2, pp. 137-38.

[131] It is important to note that this understanding need not be conscious. That is, I need not consciously think "This is a thing with an internal life!" Rather, depending on the particular experience, such an understanding may be implicit, remaining in the background. This possibility will be discussed in more detail below. However, though this understanding need not be conscious, in cases where there is a switch, as in the wax case, the understanding may very well be conscious.

[132] Such considerations are not limited to sight. They also apply to other ways we are presented with the internal lives of others. Suppose I hear a loud noise, "Ah!" If I fail to grasp that this is an expressive noise emitting from an other, then I merely hear a loud noise, and not a sign of expression.

Here we come to a second reason for thinking that empathic content is required. Begin with an account that claims empathy is feeling what another feels (e.g., Decety and Lamm 2006). It is not enough, however, to *merely* feel what another feels. For this is probably occurring right now. I am currently hungry. Many others in the world are hungry too. But my feeling of hunger has nothing to do with them. The hunger is *mine*. The fact that others feel hungry is not relevant here. The other is not an aspect of my experience, and so does not qualify as an experience of empathy.

At this point it might be argued that there needs to be some sort of causal link between the other, and my feeling what the other feels. Let us grant this. It is still not sufficient for empathy. Suppose I see you cry, and I become sad. If I do not understand that the reason I am sad is *because* you are, then even though I'm feeling what you're feeling, and you are indeed the cause of my feeling sad, you still won't enter into my experience. As I will experience this sadness as my own. Again, the other drops out of the experience. What is needed is for the sadness to be presented as representing *your* internal state. Without this, what we have is not a case of empathy, but of emotional contagion– an experience in which one catches the emotion of the other, like one would catch a cold.

In cases of emotional contagion, though I catch the emotions of the other, I lose the distinction between the other's experience, and my own. Recalling our previous discussion about non-primordiality, we might say that in cases of emotional contagion, the other's experience is experienced primordially, as actually happening to me. And because of this, the distinction between my own, and the other's experience is lost. The object of the experience is my own state, not the other's.

Similar considerations apply to other characterizations of empathy, whether it is imagining or otherwise. However, due to space constraints I will not discuss them in detail here. It is sufficient to note that if empathic content does not accompany these acts, then the other will drop out of consideration. This being the case, the experience will not qualify as one of empathy.

I think it is because of a failure to explicitly pay attention to the content of empathic experience that we see so many *apparently* diverse characterizations of the phenomenon.[133] My claim, on the contrary, is that insofar as empathic content is present, all of these characterizations qualify as different varieties of empathic experience. That is, they are all specifications of the formal structure of empathy.

***§2.3.1.2 Varieties of empathic content***

So far we have only discussed why empathic content is needed, but we have yet to specify what kinds of empathic content there are. Because the intentional object of an empathic experience is the internal state of another, and this state is a complex whole, there will be varying degrees of the other's state that is empathically understood. These degrees of empathic understanding will largely correspond to the parts that constitute the formal structure of intentionality. In this section I sketch a number of ways the other's experience can be empathically understood. The various presentations are what I refer to as *empathic content*. As I will point out, some contents are more basic than others, in the sense that they are included in, and yet distinct from, the content of which they are a part. And to these more or less basic forms of content corresponds more or less basic forms of empathy.[134]

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[133] I think this may also have implications for the theory of mind debate, the debate concerning which mechanisms underlie our capacity to attribute mental states to others and to ourselves. However, the way in which empathy is related to this debate is a topic for another day.

[134] This is another place where I have not seen much work done explicitly. Though Smith (1989) acknowledges that empathy comes in degrees, he chooses to set this issue aside. In the text below I explain different kinds of empathic contents, and note how they correspond to different degrees of empathic complexity.

The most basic form of empathic content, which is included in all others, is that of being presented with the other *as* other. Corresponding to this, the most basic form of empathy is that of understanding that *there is* an other. To understand that there is an other is to distinguish the other from mere material objects, like tables and chairs. It is to understand that there is a zero point of orientation capable of experiencing the world. And as was already mentioned, there is something it is like to be presented with other *as* other.[135] The content is thus grounded phenomenally.

Some might balk at the idea that understanding that there is an other is a form of empathy at all. However, note that in order to understand that another is in a particular mental state, or what that state is, one must first understand that there is something capable of having such states. This is why I claim that recognizing the other *as* other is the most basic form of empathy.[136] In this respect, we can empathize with animals, and possibly insects. Animals are situated in the world, and appear to be capable of at least some sorts of experiences. They appear to have a zero point.[137] Similarly, a number of species will be capable empathizing with conspecifics, as well as with individuals of other species.

A slightly more complex form of empathic experience is that of being presented with an other as being "like us" in certain, crucial respects. That is, as being presented as "one of us." Here, while we might recognize animals as being like us in that they have a zero point, and so are capable of experience, they are *unlike* us in many respects, such as intellect and language use. Because of these differences, animals will not be able to have the range of mental states that we have. At this level of empathic experience, we understand that others belong to our group, such

[135] Here, as well as in other cases, if one doubts there is a phenomenal quality that comes with the presentation, try to perform a contrast argument. Thus, here one might contrast cases of seeing a real person with seeing a wax figure.
[136] I am not alone in understanding empathy in this manner. See Smith (1989), Chapter 3, and Carter *et al.,* (2009).
[137] It might turn out that we can only empathize with animals to a certain extent, as there may be experiences that animals, but not humans, can have, for instance, what it's like to be a bat (Nagel, 1974).

as our species or kind. This level depends on the most basic form of empathy, because in order to recognize one as part of our kind, we must first recognize the other as an other.[138] Again, a number of species will be capable of this form of empathy, and indeed, animals require this in order to recognize conspecifics, predators, and prey.

Further, this presentation also has a phenomenal aspect. A contrast case should help to bring this out. Consider times when, after learning some detail about a stranger, you come to think of her as being like you in some way. There is a phenomenal switch, one that goes from seeing the other as a stranger, to one of seeing the other as being like you. Here the content is not only phenomenal, but arguably is an instance of cognitive phenomenology.

Slightly more complex than this is when the other is presented as being in a certain kind of mental state.[139] I might, for instance, understand that you are sad. While this form depends on basic empathy, it does not depend on recognizing an other as one of us, as we seem capable of understanding the emotions of animals. We can, for instance, hear the sadness in a dog's whine, or feel its pain as it hobbles away. However, some mental states *will* require that we understand that the other is like us, because some mental states can only be instantiated by some kinds of creatures. Take, for instance, a feeling of nationalism. Presumably, this requires having the concept of a 'nation', which animals do not have. And insofar as there is something it is like to be in a particular mental state, this form of empathy will also have a distinct phenomenological character.

More complex than this still is understanding the *object* of the other's state. I might understand that you are sad, without understanding what it is you're sad about. But I might also

[138] By 'first' I do not mean temporally. Rather, there is a kind of epistemic priority here. Understanding that one is like us requires recognizing one as a candidate for such classification. At a minimum, a requirement for candidacy is that an other *is* an other, and so we must recognize her as such.
[139] It is this form of empathy that is currently discussed as the theory of mind.

understand that the sadness is due to a sudden death in the family. And in understanding what your state is about, I might also understand some (or all) of the content. For instance, when I understand that you're sad over the death of a family member, I also understand that this object (the dead individual) is presented *as* a person. You are not merely suffering over the loss of a cherished material object, but a person.

And along similar lines, understanding the content of your experience more or less fully will involve me understanding the *significance* that this state, object, and content has for you.[140] Understanding *this* will involve having certain background beliefs about the other's own background underlying her own experience. Thus, if you are sad over the death of your father, your experience will be much different if you loved him and he was your best friend, than if he was estranged, and you barely knew him. And how your sadness is presented to *me* will vary depending on what I know about the relationship you had with your father. Again, phenomenal qualities abound.

Still yet another feature to be empathically understood is the phenomenal component of the other's experience itself. Perhaps you know that dislocating one's shoulder is painful, and that *I* hate dislocating my shoulder. While you might understand some of the phenomenal components (e.g., that there is some type of pain involved), unless you have had a dislocation, you will not *fully* understand what such an experience is like, as the particular sort of pain involved is one peculiar to this type of injury.[141] And so you might understand that I am in pain without understanding the type of pain that it is.

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[140] Here I only mention two aspects of understanding the content of an other's experience, how an object is presented (e.g., a corpse as person), and the significance. But there is more to grasping the content of an other's experience than this. Unfortunately, due to space constraints I cannot give a full discussion of grasping the content of an other's experience.

[141] This is important to recognize, especially if I am correct that there is a cognitive phenomenology. For if having certain thoughts and experiences is necessary to grasp phenomenal character, and grasping phenomenal character is crucial for empathy, then unless you have had the same (or similar enough) experience as someone that you are

So there are many varieties of empathic content, and many degrees to which one can empathically understand the other's experience. I do not claim that this list is exhaustive, but it does give us an idea of the many ways empathy can occur. In short, one has an empathic experience when empathic content is tokened in one's intentional structure. Empathic content is a kind of content, and this kind of content can be instantiated in various ways. The ways in which this kind of content can be instantiated largely corresponds to the parts of the intentional structure itself.

With this in mind, let me return to an issue that was briefly raised while discussing the general features of empathic understanding (*§2.3*). I noted that there may be times when a person's understanding might be true, or accurate, in one respect, and false, or inaccurate, in others. We are now in a position to understand why this is the case.

Because empathic content comes in more or less basic forms, it might be the case that a basic form of empathic experience is accurate (e.g., there is an other), while a more complex form is not (e.g., I see that you are sad when you are not). It is in virtue of these degrees of complexity that one may inaccurately understand the experience of another, and yet still count as being empathic, if only in a minimal sense.[142]

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trying to empathize with, you might not really understand how it feels to be in that person's position. And to claim otherwise is to further estrange and isolate the person. Thus, somewhat ironically, sometimes the best way to empathize with an other is to acknowledge that you can't understand exactly what they're going through.

[142] For similar reasons, this is why it is inaccurate to claim that sociopaths lack empathy. Such individuals might lack a certain *kind* of empathy, but to claim that they lack empathy *simpliciter* is strictly speaking false. Consider, for example, the torturer. In order for a torturer to inflict pain on an other, the torturer must be able to identify an appropriate victim. For a torturer who spends his time setting inanimate objects on fire is no torturer, but a pyromaniac.

### *§2.3.2 Empathic act-types*

While there seems to be agreement that empathy is other-oriented, there is much divergence with respect to further characterizations of the relevant act-type.[143] As we see in *table 1* above, some theorists characterize empathy as an *imaginative* process (Goldman, 1993). Others claim that it is a *perceptual* act (Preston and de Waal, 2002). And still others characterize empathy as a way of *feeling* what another feels (Decety and Lamm, 2006).[144] Indeed, as far as I can tell, the act-type is the major source of divergence in characterizations of empathy. What I want to suggest, however, is that there is in fact no deep disagreement here. While each characterization employs a different kind of act-type, all of these qualify as varieties of empathic experience, because each act-type is able to present a subject with empathic content. However, because empathic content is characterized by what it presents (the other, and her internal states), there is no *one* particular act-type that can do this.[145] We might contrast empathic content with, for example, color content. Color is strictly visual. Thus, *hearing* cannot present *purple*. It would be a category mistake to think that it could. No such category mistake applies to empathic content. Thus, there is no particular act-type that is necessary for empathy. The only requirement is that the act-type tokened in the intentional structure be able to present empathic content.[146]

However, even though no one act-type is required, it is worth taking a moment to note how various act-types may modify empathic understanding, and so how it may modify the empathic intentional structure. First, the act-type will alter the phenomenal character. This may occur in a variety of ways. Consider that *imagining* an apple is phenomenally different from

[143] It should be noted that I am importing the term 'act-type' in this context, as most theorists do not speak in these terms. Nonetheless, their characterizations do include act-types, even if they are not labeled as such.
[144] See Batson (2009) for a number of other ways empathy is characterized.
[145] However, there are some act-types that *cannot* do this, such as smell or taste.
[146] It should also be noted that not all empathic contents can be presented via any act-type. I cannot see the phenomenal character of a particular pain, even though I can see that an other is in pain. Here it helps to recall the example of shoulder dislocation.

*seeing* an apple. Imagining is less vivid, it lacks a spatial location, and there are different horizonal possibilities associated with each. You cannot reach out and grab an imagined apple. Similar considerations apply to other appropriate act-types.

Second, as noted, empathic understanding will furnish the subject with beliefs about the other. And which act-type is involved may determine which beliefs are occurrent, and which remain in the background.[147] For instance, some act-types that present empathic content can be more or less actively performed, as, for example, when one imagines another's situation *in order to understand* what it is like for that person. In such cases, empathic understanding may be the central intentional state of the subject, and so once imagined, the subject consciously considers things about the other.

Other act-types, however, may be more passive, as when I see someone's face as she tells me a story. My central state might be on trying to understand the details of the story. And even though I see that the person is sad, this thought need not consciously occur to me. Rather, this thought might remain in the background, and modify my occurent experience of hearing, and understanding the story.

In the above cases empathy is a central aspect of the experience. However, in many of our daily experiences, empathy may be part of our experience without it being the *central* intentional experience. Rather, empathy might merely be a part of one's occurrent intentional experience. And in such cases empathy may be in the periphery. Here too, the occurrence of empathy will modify the phenomenal character of one's experience.

[147] The context in which the act-type is being exercised will also have an effect on which beliefs are occurrent, and which remain in the background.

Consider a basic case, understanding that *there are* others around you.[148] You might be sitting in a café, immersed in your work, not paying attention to the people around you. Yet your experience is significantly different than one when you're in a café totally alone, not even surrounded by the people who work there. This again is different from an experience in which there are lifelike wax figures you know to be fake.

In each case, empathy is not the central experience you're having. Rather, your intentional state is one of concentration on your work. And yet a background understanding of the fact that there are others modifies your experience in certain ways. Your horizon changes. What is appropriate behavior when alone is not the same as when among others. Additionally, when in public, at any moment a stranger might engage you in a conversation. Whereas, when alone, this possibility is not part of your horizon. Because the background is partly constituted by a peripheral empathic experience, you will also have different beliefs that operate in the background when you understand that there are others around you.

To sum up. Empathic understanding is a combination of empathic content being tokened via some particular act-type. In general, when one empathically understands, one is furnished with beliefs about the other. These beliefs dispose the individual to act in certain ways. Further, though there is no particular act-type required for empathic understanding, which act-type is tokened will modify the empathic intentional structure in various ways, as will different kinds of empathic content. And empathic content itself can be more or less complex, thus allowing for varieties of empathic experience.

In the next section we discuss the final essential components of the intentional structure of empathic experience – the *background* and *horizon*. Here I will pay particular attention to the kinds of background considerations involved in empathy.

[148] See section *§2.3.1.2* for a discussion of this basic form of empathy.

### *§2.5 Background, context, and horizon*

In any given experience there will be a set of background beliefs that dispose an individual to react to her environment in certain ways. These background beliefs will not, for the most part, be conscious. However, they will inform, and modify her conscious state. Suppose, for example, that you are at your desk, immersed in work. You reach for a glass of water, and it spills. Immediately, you move your laptop and grab towels. In such a case, you need not *first* recall that water is bad for electronics, and that towels absorb water, *and then* move your laptop and grab towels. Rather, given your environment, these beliefs were part of the background of your experience. It is because you have these beliefs in the background that you're able to react so quickly.

The beliefs that you have in the computer case are of a particular sort; they're beliefs about how material objects interact with one another. These are not the only kinds of beliefs one may have in the background; there are others. And which of these are salient may be determined by the subject's occurrent intentional state, as well as her environment.

In this section I want to characterize the kind of background beliefs operant in empathic experience. As far as I have seen, though background beliefs are implicit in some discussions of empathy (e.g., Smith, 1989), a detailed categorization has not been given. As we will see, it is in virtue of these background beliefs that one may have more or less complex forms of empathy. And so, in order to understand how different varieties of empathic experience may arise, we need to know the background beliefs that enable them.

There are, I claim, three basic kinds of background beliefs that operate in empathy. I will refer to them as *other-oriented*, *environment-oriented*, and *experience-oriented* beliefs. As will be discussed shortly, each of these basic kinds can be divided into sub-species (see *fig. 2* below).

When these three kinds of background beliefs are combined, they form the full background for empathic experience. As we proceed, I will also note how these beliefs help constitute the horizon of empathic experience.

Let us begin with *other-oriented* beliefs. Other-oriented beliefs are beliefs about the other whose experience you are attempting to understand. This category of background belief is itself subject to further division. Consider first what I call *personality-beliefs*. These kinds of beliefs are beliefs about a person's preferences, her beliefs about the world, and how she is disposed to react to various kinds of events. If I believe that Tom is hot-tempered, then I will more easily understand that he is angry when I see him throw up his hands, and stomp around. If, however, I have never seen Tom get angry, I might be confused by this behavior. I might even think that he's pretending. Having beliefs about a person's personality will thus modify the way in which the other is presented to us when we observe (or imagine) the other performing a certain kind of behavior.

Another kind of other-oriented belief concern's the person's history, call these *historical*-beliefs. These beliefs might include the person's relationships with others (which might include yourself), the other's recent history (Tom just got fired), and the other's more distant past (Tom was hit a lot as a child). It is not the case that we always have all, or even any, of these beliefs about the other. But when we do, and the context calls for it, they may operate in the background in order to help us understand the internal state of the other.

Yet a third type of other-oriented belief concerns the kinds of groups the other identifies with, and how seriously the person takes her commitments to such groups– call these *group-identity* beliefs. Such groups may include her cultural background, religion, professional affiliations, favorite sports teams, and others. Again, having these beliefs about the other may

help us understand not only the behavior of others, but what it's like to be *that* person in *this* experience.

Finally, we may also have beliefs about the other's future plans, be they immediate or distant. Call these *future*-beliefs. These are especially relevant when understanding the intention of the other in cases of action. If, for example, I believe that you want to lose weight, then when I run into you at the gym I need not wonder what you're doing there. It is because I am aware of your goals that I have an immediate understanding of your behavior.

Though there may be cases where you must *first* recall some belief in order to understand the other, a majority of our experiences are not like this. Rather, for a majority of our experiences, such beliefs operate in the background of an occurent experience, and thus modify how the other is presented to us. Such beliefs will also constitute a horizon of appropriate behavior with the other, as well as expectations about how the other will behave, and how she might feel in certain situations.

On their own, however, other-oriented beliefs will not be enough to enable one to understand the mental state of the other. For we may have lots of beliefs about another person at any given time, not all of which will be relevant for understanding the other's occurrent state. In order to narrow down which beliefs are relevant, we must recognize the context, or environment, in which the other is placed.

And yet before we can understand how an individual will react *in* a given environment, we first need to have certain beliefs about the environment itself. I will refer to these beliefs as *environment-oriented* beliefs. Again, it is possible to break this category of belief into sub-categories. There are beliefs about material objects in the environment, such as the computer case from above. There are also beliefs about social situations. For instance, beliefs about what is

appropriate behavior at a cocktail party, as opposed to a football game. There are beliefs about how individuals *normally* behave, or are *likely* to behave in certain situations. In cases of danger, people are likely to scream. When at a comedy club, people are likely to laugh. When environment-oriented beliefs are combined with other-oriented beliefs, then one may have various kinds of empathic experiences. However, not all of the varieties of empathic experience will be enabled by these two types of belief.

Let us consider then, what I am calling *experience-oriented* beliefs. These beliefs concern what an experience *is like*. That is, they concern the phenomenal character of experience. Of course, what an experience is like will vary from person to person, and this variation will be due, in part, to the person's background. However, there do seem to be *some* common aspects of experiences, ones that will occur even once we account for the aspects of a person's background that might modify her overall experience. Consider burning your hand. In order to understand this example, you already have to have some beliefs about how the sensation of burning feels, and how it would feel on your hand, as opposed to an area on your back. Such beliefs are *qualitative*. As mentioned, they concern the phenomenal aspects of an experience. And so we have a another way in which phenomenality is implicated in the structure of empathic experience.[149] Beliefs about an experience concern, at least in part, this qualitative character.

However, the qualitative character is not the only kind of belief one may have about an experience. For we often evaluate different kinds of experiences. This value need not have any moral component. I like eating ice cream, and so I associate eating ice-cream with some sort of positive evaluation.[150] And so, having beliefs about how certain experiences are normally

[149] Recall that other ways phenomenality is implicated in the empathic structure is the non-primordial character by which the other's experience is presented to us in empathy, and in a majority of empathic contents.
[150] Though this is not the place for it, it is an interesting issue of how qualitative character is related to our evaluative judgments in a moral context.

regarded, and specifically, having beliefs about how the other regards *this* particular experience, will play a role in understanding the experience of the other.

When we combine other-oriented, environment-oriented, and experience-oriented beliefs we have the full background of empathic experience (see *fig. 2*). If I know that you're easily upset, but that you hate your job, and have been looking for an excuse to leave, then when you tell me that your company is bankrupt and closing, it's easy for me to understand that you're happy, and why this is the case. Here, operating in the background, are my beliefs about your preferences (other-oriented beliefs), what it means for a company to shut down (environment-oriented beliefs), and how it feels to do something you hate (experience-oriented beliefs). Without my belief that you hate your job, I might initially be confused by your tone when you tell me the company is going under. Based on your personality alone, I would have thought that you would be upset.

Importantly, though one might use background beliefs to *infer* the other's inner state, this need not be the case. When you tell me about your company, I hear the lighthearted tone in your voice, and *immediately* understand your inner state. In this case, my perception gives rise to understanding. However, if I did not have the belief about how you hate your job, then based on your tone and facial expression, I might have had to *theorize* about why you seem happy. Only in the latter case is there an inference being made.[151]

[151] A virtue of this model is that it is able to explain why we can more easily understand the inner states of those with whom we are close. When close with a person, we have more information about her, and so we are disposed to understand what someone is thinking, or will think, in different situations.

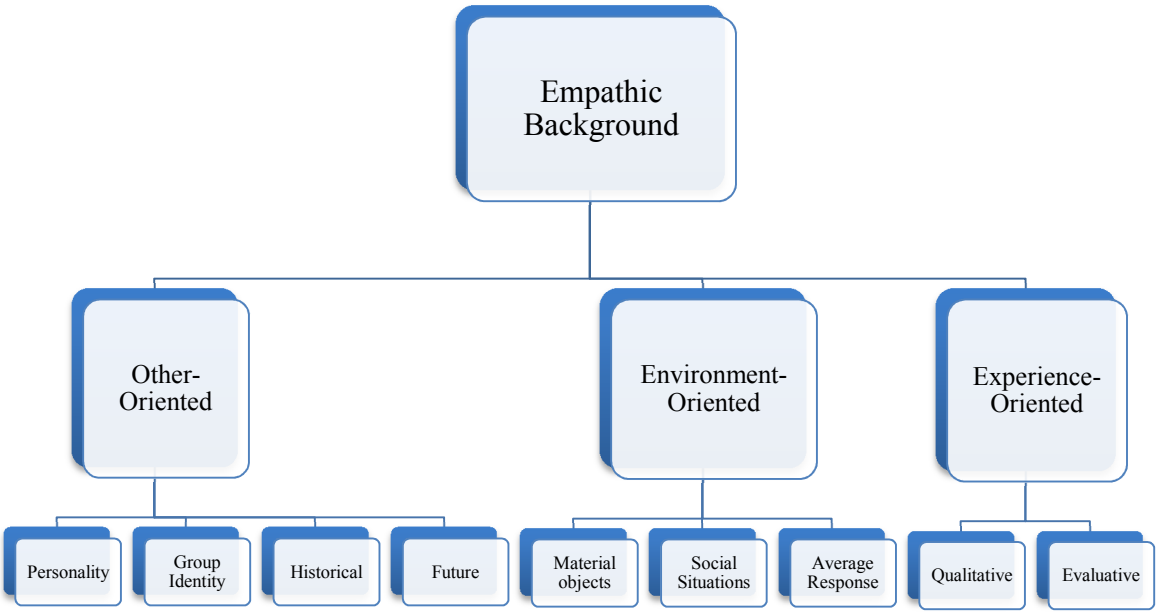


***Figure 2*: Diagram of the Empathic Background**

### *§2.6 Summing up*

This concludes the outline of the formal structure of empathic experience. Diagrammatically, we might represent it as follows:

I - - - - empathically understand - - - - the (an) other's experience - - - - non-primordially[152]
[Subj.] [act-type + content] [Object] [Phenomenally]

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*Background*: Other-oriented beliefs (i.e., personality, cultural, historical, and future beliefs) + environment-oriented beliefs (i.e., material objects, social context, general beliefs about how persons normally react) + experience-oriented beliefs (i.e., qualitative and evaluative).
*Horizon*: Expectations about how the other will act, appropriate forms of interaction with the other, etc.

***Figure 3: The Empathic Structure***

When an experience instantiates this structure, it will be one of empathy. The structure can be instantiated in a variety of ways. The act-type in virtue of which one empathically understands may be perceptual, imaginative, or otherwise. The content can be more or less complex. And the background may be more or less full. Thus, there are varieties of empathic experience.

[152] This is but one way in which phenomenality is part of the empathic structure.

Let us now consider various ways researchers have understood empathy. As we will see, the formal structure presented above can be applied to all, or at least a majority of the ways 'empathy' has been understood since its inception.

### *§3. Applying the model*

I began the chapter by noting that empathy is characterized in a number of ways, and that my aim is to provide a unifying explanation. In this section we test the theory. We do this by applying the formal account discussed above to different characterizations of empathy. It will not be possible to go through all of the ways empathy has been discussed. However, I will address what I take to be three common conceptions.

### *§3.1 Perspective taking*

Perhaps the most common conception of empathy is that of perspective taking (e.g., Goldman, 2006, 1993, Adolphs, 1999, Darwall 1998, Lipps 1903/1979).[153] When one takes the perspective of another, one imaginatively projects herself into the other's situation. It is to this idea that the colloquial expression, "putting yourself in someone else's shoes," seems to appeal. Goldman (1993) characterizes perspective taking as having the following features: (i) imaginative projection into the other's situation, (ii) in imaginative projection the empathizer imagines the *mental states* of the other, (iii) the relevant mental states are usually, though not always, affective states, and (iv) the empathizer is aware that the pretend states she is imagining *represent* the other's internal states. (351)

Though Goldman does not speak in the terms we have been employing, his explanation is amenable to phenomenological analysis.

[153] What I am calling "perspective taking" comes in many forms. As such, different authors may specify the nature of perspective taking in slightly different ways. For our purposes, these details do not matter, as they are minor variations of the general empathic structure. For three different characterizations of perspective taking see Batson (2009), pp. 6-7.

*I* (subject)---*emphatically understand*---in virtue of *imagining* the other's situation (act-type)---*the other's mental states* (object)---which are presented as *pretend* states that are *representative* of the other's state (phenomenal character/empathic content).

First note that perspective taking requires the basic level of empathy, as in order to adopt a perspective, one must first recognize that there is a perspective to adopt. But perspective taking is more than this. Perspective taking is not just recognizing another perspective, but *imagining* what that perspective is like from the first person point of view. Thus, one aspect of the empathic structure specified in perspective taking is the modality that gives rise to understanding. In this case, the modality is one of imagining. I understand your state in virtue of imagining myself in your situation.

A second way the empathic structure is specified has to do with the content. As Goldman describes it, the subject is aware that her pretend states are *representative* of the other's internal states. Here, we seem to have an indication that the way the other's states are presented are non-primordial, due to its pretend nature, as well as the idea that such states are presented as representative.[154] This is important, as the manner of presentation, "as representative," allows for the empathizer to retain the distinction between her own, and the other's experience.

It is important to note that perspective taking can have different kinds of empathic content. As described by Goldman, the empathic content is one about *which* mental states are being instantiated by the other. In paradigm cases, the states are *affective*. But more can be said here. Consider that there are at least two ways one can adopt the other's perspective. First, I can imagine what it is like for *me* to be in the other's situation. Or second, I can imagine what it would be like *if I were the other person* in her situation. The difference here is a difference in

[154] While nothing about the horizon or background is explicitly discussed, one must have certain beliefs about the other, and her situation, in order to imagine that perspective. And in virtue of this, certain horizonal possibilities will be implicit in the experience itself. Similar considerations apply to the two other conceptions of empathy considered in this section.

personal background; a difference in the specific zero point oriented to the situation. I might hear a story about when you saw your parents die, and then imagine how I would feel if I saw that happen to my own parents. But I might also imagine what that would be like if I were you, an orphan who spent most of her life searching for her birth parents, only to see them die moments before meeting them face to face for the first time. In each case I understand *something* about your experience. However, in the second case I am presented with more content about your experience than in the first. The second is thus a fuller, or more complex form of, empathic experience.

***§3.2 Direct perception***

Another common conception of empathy is that of direct perception (e.g., Zahavi 2011, Gallagher 2008, Preston et al. 2007, Preseton and de Waal 2002, Lipps 1903/1979).[155] According to such accounts, the empathic content is understood through a direct perception of the other, no inference or imaginative process is required. I *see* that the other is sad. I *hear* the anger in her voice. In such cases, the manner in which I perceive the other is one in which I perceive an expression of her internal state through her behavior. Again, this already assumes a basic level of empathy, as perceiving an emotion, for instance, assumes that the thing perceived is a bearer of emotions.

As with perspective taking, perceptual accounts specify a particular part of the formal structure of empathic experience. In this case, what is modified is, again, the modality that gives rise to a state of understanding. Thus we have the following modification of the empathic structure:

[155] It seems as if Lipps can be interpreted in two ways, one of imaginative projection, and the other as direct perception. Sometimes he speaks of *observing* others (374), which seems to be akin to a direct perception model. However, at other times he speaks of *contemplating* the movement of the other (374). It isn't clear whether contemplation is supposed to occur during observation, or separately. If separately, then this seems closer to perspective taking.

*I* (subject)---*empathically understand* --- in virtue of *seeing, hearing, etc.* the other's behavior(act-type)---*the other's inner states* (object)--- in which the behavior of the other is presented as *expressive of the other's* states (phenomenal character/empathic content).

As indicated from the schematization, it might also be thought that another specification of the structure of empathic experience is the content, where the way in which the other is presented in direct perception is always one in which the other's behavior is presented as *expressive* of her inner states, be them intentions, thoughts, feelings, or what have you (Walsh, 2014). Here, the idea is that what is crucial for a direct perception model of empathy is that there is a close-knit connection between bodily behavior, and one's internal states. And it is in virtue of perceiving the behavior of others that we are presented with features of the other's internal states. Bodily behavior is thus presented *as* expressive of the other's internal states.

Notice, however, that this content 'behavior as expressive' need not occur in perspective taking. I might, for instance, imagine what it was like for my brother to break his arm, where I imagine this from a first person perspective, as if *I* were the one with a broken limb. Here, there need not be any expressive behavior involved, though of course some behavior may accompany this event. Rather, what I am trying to imagine, that is, my target, is the particular *pain* that comes with breaking an arm. Or, perhaps, the dread my brother feels at the sudden realization that a limb will be out of use for six weeks.

### *§3.3 Coming to feel what another feels*

Finally, let us consider coming to feel as another feels (e.g., Decety et al. 2012, Darwall 1998, Smith 1790/2002, Hume 1739).[156] It is important to note that it isn't clear whether this characterization is independent from perspective taking, or direct perception. Sometimes coming to feel as another feels is spoken about in conjunction with perspective taking (e.g., Darwall,

[156] I should note that both Smith and Hume used the term 'sympathy' for what we have been considering as empathy.

1998), and at other times with direct perception (e.g., Smith 1790/2002).[157] Nonetheless, given the prevalence of the characterization it is worth taking a moment to note how it is accommodated by the present view.

'Empathy', originally translated from the German word *Einfühlung* (Titchener, 1909), literally means 'feeling into.' In such cases, we feel what the other is feeling. As Smith (1989) explains, this "feeling" need not be limited to emotions. Rather, "In empathy I comprehend the other's experience as if I were "feeling" such an experience, as if I were having an inner awareness of the experience in its phenomenological structure, including what it "feels" like to have such an experience." (120) Thus, what is included is much wider than mere emotion. It includes all qualitative aspects of an experience.

Note that this characterization of empathy must at least implicitly include understanding that this feeling is the *other's* feeling, lest it collapse into emotional contagion. That is, when one feels what the other is feeling, this feeling must give rise to an understanding that this feeling is what the *other* is feeling. Without understanding this, the other will drop out of consideration, and the experience will cease to be empathy. Part of the way this distinction is retained is due to the qualitative character of how the other's experience is presented. I do not *literally* feel exactly what the other is feeling. Rather, the other's experience is presented non-primordially, as a kind of recreation of the other's experience.[158]

Thus, the way in which the empathic structure is specified in coming to feel as another feels is again by specifying the modality and content.

*I* (subject)---*empathically understand*---in virtue of *feeling* what the other feels (act-type)---*the other's experience* (object)--- in which the other's experience is *presented as* the other's experience (phenomenal character/empathic content).

[157] Smith seems to think that we can come to feel what another feels through *either* perception or imagination. See, for instance, Smith (1790/2002), pp. 11-16.
[158] For further discussion about the reproductive aspects of empathy, see Smith (1989), pp. 119-121.

Importantly, this might not be a full characterization, as we are still left with the question of *how* one comes to feel as another feels. It is because of this that I noted this concept of empathy may not be completely independent of perspective taking, or direct perception. One might, for instance, imagine the other's situation, and in virtue of adopting this perspective one then comes to feel as the other feels. Or perhaps I see someone burn their hand, and as a part of this perception, I come to have a visceral feeling in my hand. In any case, this too would count as a form of empathy, as it specifies the formal structure in a way consistent with the instantiation of the empathic structure.

So we see that three common characterizations are similar in that they all instantiate the formal structure proposed. And though this discussion is by no means exhaustive, hopefully it has given some indication of how to apply the model to alternative characterizations of empathy.

***§. Conclusion***

There is much disagreement over the proper characterization of empathy. Though empathy is a topic studied in a variety of fields, there does not seem to be a consistent characterization of the phenomenon. Rather, what we have is a number of related, yet distinct characterizations.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide a unified account of empathy, one that can explain what these diverse characterizations have in common. According to my account, empathy is a species of intentionality in which a subject understands the experience of another subject, without confusion between her own and the other's experience. This species of intentionality has a certain formal structure, one that is a specification of a more general structure, intentionality. My claim is that the majority of ways empathy is characterized qualify as instances of empathy because they instantiate this empathic structure. Thus, there is no deep

disagreement between the various characterizations. The reason these characterizations *appear* so divergent is because of the way the empathic intentional structure is specified. Because there are numerous ways the same structure may be legitimately specified, there will be varieties of empathic experience.[159]

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# CONCLUSION

## *§. Review of the dissertation*

This dissertation was composed of three distinct, but related papers in the philosophy of mind. The driving questions had to do with the relationship between phenomenality, and intentionality. Roughly, the idea is that the source of intentionality resides in phenomenality. In particular, phenomenality directs the state, and serves to ground reference. This was the topic of Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2 I addressed the question of cognitive phenomenology. This, too, addresses questions concerned with how phenomenality relates to intentionality. This question is about whether cognitive mental contents have a proprietary phenomenology, or whether the phenomenology of conscious thought is ultimately sensory in nature. Here I argued for a liberal view of cognitive phenomenology, according to which concepts, and the content of conceptual activity, have proprietary phenomenological qualities. This chapter also served to illustrate how phenomenal intentionality applies to cognitive episodes.

Finally, in Chapter 3 I developed an account of empathy, and as I developed the account, I noted how the results of the first two chapters were part of empathic experience. According to the account of empathy I proposed, empathy is a species of intentionality. What makes an experience one of empathy is that the intentional structure is modified in various ways. As we saw, empathy involves phenomenally intentional presentations, as well as instances of cognitive phenomenology. If the account is correct, then it would appear that phenomenality is a crucial aspect of empathy.

### *§. Post-dissertation projects*

The work of this dissertation is not complete. What I want to do now is briefly sketch two lines of research that I would like to conduct in the future. First, I want to explore how my account of phenomenal intentionality can deal with the issue of how unconscious mental states can be intentional. My account holds that propositional content is grounded by phenomenal consciousness. There is, however, good reason to think that there are unconscious mental states, and that such states have intentional features. If this is correct, then my account needs to explain how this can occur.

It is too early in my research, and theorizing, to have any idea what a fleshed out view would look like. There are, however, a number of issues that I think would be worth looking into with respect to developing a view in this area. First, there is a question about *how* unconscious mental states differ from conscious ones, at least whether there are *more* differences than a lack of phenomenality. Another related aspect has to do with the structure of the unconscious mind, specifically how information is encoded and processed. Though it is too early to say, one view might be that a mental state has semantic content only when conscious. This, however, is an extreme position, and requires much more thought, and elucidation.

The second project expands on the results of this dissertation. What I want to explore is the idea that empathy is necessary for communication. As was discussed, empathy gives us *others*, and their internal states. Insofar as communicative acts involve transferring mental content from one subject to another, empathy seems crucial in at least two aspects. First, empathy is needed to locate proper objects of communication. That is, one needs to be able to identify those things for which communication is possible. Empathy also seems important for

deciding what representations one ought to use in order to properly communicate an idea to another subject.

On the other side of the communicative relationship, the hearer also must be able to identify those things that are *trying* to communicate. And empathy is also needed for identifying the intention of the speaker. Much more needs to be said, however, about how this is possible. This project will require extensive research in the philosophy of language, especially as it concerns speech acts, how a subject can intend a specific meaning, and then how a subject can communicate that meaning by assigning content to representations that are shared by multiple individuals. Thus, part of this project will deal with issues of *derived* intentionality, as was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. Both of these future projects thus continue to explore the relation between phenomenality, and intentionality.