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Troubles with Phenomenal Intentionality

As far as I can see, there are two basic ways of cashing out the claim that intentionality is ultimately phenomenal: (i) an *indirect* one, according to which the intentional content of an experiential intentional mental state is directly determined by the phenomenal character that state already possesses, so that intentionality is so determined only indirectly; ii) a *direct* one, which centers on the very property of intentionality itself and can further be construed in two manners: either that very property is determined by the above phenomenal character, or it is a *sui generis* phenomenal property, thereby giving its own contribution to the overall phenomenal character of that state. Yet neither way sounds ultimately satisfying. For the indirect way may work only under the assumption that intentionality is monadic. Since the direct way explicitly endorses this assumption, the indirect way must give pride of place to it. Yet the direct way seems to be unsuccessful, in any of its forms. Thus, the phenomenal intentionality research program ought to give way to another research program concerning intentionality.

1. Preliminaries

As one knows from Brentano (1995²) onwards, intentionality is the property primarily of mental states of *being about something* – *intentionality of reference*, as Kim (1996)

labels it – or of *having a content*, an *intentional content* as it is traditionally labeled, typically such that allows its bearer to be semantically evaluated or more generally to have satisfaction conditions (*intentionality of content*, still in Kim's labeling). For the purposes of this paper, let me consider the second feature as giving the most comprehensive characterisation of intentionality.¹ According to this way of putting things, intentionality is one thing, intentional content another: it is what is had by a mental state by virtue of its possessing intentionality, which is the *having* of that content. In Chalmers' (2004) terms, intentionality is the *representational* property of a mental state, intentional content is constituted by properties *represented* by virtue of the fact that such a state possesses that representational property.

In recent years, many people have claimed that *intentionality* is fundamentally *phenomenal* intentionality, inasmuch it is determined by phenomenal character: *the phenomenality claim*, as one may label it.² Yet the very idea of intentionality being phenomenal sounds unclear. Indeed, if intentionality is the property of *having an intentional content*, this characterisation makes no reference to phenomenal notions.³ So, can the phenomenality claim be spelled out in a clear and convincing way? The purpose of this paper is to provide a negative answer to this question.

The architecture of this paper is as follows. As far as I can see, there are two ways of cashing out the claim that intentionality is determined by phenomenal character, an indirect and a direct way. According to the indirect way, intentionality is determined by

phenomenal character via a direct determination of its intentional content, i.e., the content whose having is what intentionality amounts to, by means of phenomenal character. The direct way can be articulated in two manners, either by making intentionality be determined by the phenomenal character, sensuous or cognitive, an experiential intentional mental state possesses, or by identifying it with a *sui generis* phenomenal property. In Section 2, I focus on the indirect way, in order to show why it must yield pride of place to the direct way. In Sections 3-4, I respectively focus on the two manners of cashing out the direct way, and try to show why they are unsuccessful.

2. *The indirect way of cashing out the phenomenality of intentionality*

As far as I can see, the literature on phenomenal intentionality has relied on only a few ways of articulating the phenomenality claim. Granted, other ways are theoretically possible, but the discussion is more substantial if it focuses on the extant ones.

The most obvious and popular way of explaining the phenomenality claim resorts to exploiting a straightforward relation not between intentionality itself, i.e., the property of having an intentional content, and the phenomenal character of the relevant experiential intentional mental state, i.e., whatever constitutes the what-it-is-like of that state, but between the intentional content *as such*, i.e., what an experiential intentional mental state is supposed to have because of its being intentional, and that phenomenal

character. In this way, one wants to establish a relation between intentionality and phenomenal character *indirectly*. For one focuses not on intentionality itself, but on the relationship between intentional content and phenomenal character, in order to draw a positive conclusion as regards the phenomenal nature of the intentionality property itself. In a nutshell, content comes first; by coming later, intentionality inherits whatever affects content. So, let me call this an *indirect* way of spelling out the phenomenality claim. Basically, the intentional content of the experiential intentional mental states is (depending on how strong the relationship is supposed to be) identical with / grounded upon⁴ / supervenient on – in a word: is *determined* by – the phenomenal character of those states (Horgan & Tienson 2002,⁵ Horgan, Tienson & Graham 2004, Farkas 2008).

In actual fact, some authors – Pitt (2004), Montague (2016) – extend this approach also to experiential *cognitive* intentional mental states, e.g. consciously occurrent thoughts. For them, such states have a *cognitive* phenomenal character playing an ultimately individuating role. An experiential cognitive intentional mental state has the intentional content it has, they claim, by virtue of the fact that it has a certain cognitive phenomenal character. For the purposes of this paper, let me accept that this extension is correct.⁶ Thus, I can take the indirect way of cashing out the phenomenality claim as applying both to cognitive and to sensuous experiential intentional mental states. E.g., the difference in content between one's perception that the sky is blue and one's perception that the Sun is yellow is determined by a difference in sensuous phenomenal character between such perceptions. So is the case for the conscious judgement that the Earth is

round and the conscious judgement that the Sun is a star, if one believes in cognitive phenomenal character.

In actual fact, some people deny (e.g. Bailey and Richards 2014) that the existence of a mere supervenience relation of the intentional content on the phenomenal character is enough to establish the phenomenality claim meant in the indirect way. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will accept that *any* formulation of the idea that intentional content is determined by phenomenal character is plausible. Moreover, I will also accept that, *modulo* externalist scruples, that is, provided that (at least some) intentional content is *narrow*, i.e., not individuated in relational terms involving a natural or a social environment,⁷ this indirect way of cashing out the phenomenality claim is plausible in itself. One of the cases that strikes me as showing this plausibility is a paradigmatic Gestalt switch: while still facing one and the same figure, say the Mach figure, one alternatively grasps different *Gestalten* of it corresponding to different ways of perceptually grouping the figure's basic elements. Undoubtedly, a *phenomenal* change is primarily involved here: in a Gestalt switch, one is alternating different *experiences*. Moreover, as various people maintain, one's different alternating experiences of that figure have different intentional contents. In one experience, one sees the figure according to a diamondwise organisation; in the other one, one sees the very same figure yet according to a tilted-squarewise organisation (e.g. Jagnow 2011, Orlandi 2011, Raftopoulos 2011). Thus, that difference in intentional content seems to be determined by a difference in the phenomenal character of such experiences.⁸

This plausibility notwithstanding, this way of cashing out the phenomenality claim has a major flaw: it is *superfluous*. For a friend of phenomenal intentionality may obtain the desired result for intentionality determination by straightforwardly appealing to the *direct* way. Let us see why.

In order for the fact that (narrow) *content* is determined by phenomenal character to be relevant for the very property of *intentionality*, one must already *assume* that intentionality is a *monadic* property of an (experiential) intentional mental state. In other words, one must assume that in order for that state to have intentional content and thereby intentionality itself, it must be modified in some way or other. As is well known, having a monadic property amounts to that modification. For Kriegel (2011), intentionality is indeed monadic: the state has the monadic property of *being-directed-upon-somehow*. For if one does not endorse that assumption, claiming that intentional content is determined by phenomenal character may be irrelevant for showing that *the property of intentionality itself*, not intentional content, is phenomenal.

Let me expand on this. If intentionality itself amounted to the monadic property of *having-an-intentional-content*, one could not draw a distinction between intentionality on the one hand and intentional content on the other. Thus, the fact that intentional content is determined by phenomenal character would immediately count as the fact that intentionality itself is so determined. Yet suppose that intentionality were a *relational* property, even the property for an intentional mental state to be in a certain

relation with a certain (narrow) content, if not with an object (Crane 2001). Then *pace* Farkas (2008) and Horgan (2013), the fact that intentional content is determined by phenomenal character would be completely irrelevant to the nature of *intentionality*, taken precisely as a *relation*.⁹ Granted, intentional content might be narrow because phenomenal character is so, while intentionality might be relational; as I just said, it might consist in a relation to that admittedly narrow content. Yet as such, that intentionality relation would have nothing to do with phenomenal character. Indeed, by appealing to an idea originally defended by Brentano (1995²), a friend of phenomenal intentionality may even retort with Bourget (2019) that intentionality remains narrow, even if it amounts to a relation to an entity that is not a mind-independent item (as one may instead claim either in a Fregean (1997) fashion appealing to abstract intentional contents or in a Husserlian (1970) fashion appealing to transcendent external objects). Yet again, this makes no difference as regards the problem at issue. For in its being a *relation* to that entity, intentionality, *qua* that relation may still not be determined by the phenomenal character that instead determines that entity. For example, it could be a relation of *reference** to a mind-dependent object in Chomsky's (1992) computational terms. As such, it would not be determined by phenomenal character.

A friend of phenomenal intentionality might object that the determination of intentionality by phenomenal character is independent of whether intentionality is monadic or relational. For, since intentional content is determined by phenomenal

character, the property of *having an intentional content*, however construed (either in monadic or in relational terms) is so determined as well.

This objection is obviously flawed. For in general, as I just said as regards the particular case of a relation to a mind-dependent object, if a property is relational, the determination of one of its *relata* by something else does not affect the property itself. One may clearly see this point in many cases. Consider e.g. the *appreciation* relation holding between a person and an object's property, say its harmony. The property of *being harmonious* may well be determined by some properties of the object that are more basic than harmony, say its formal configuration. Yet this does not cause the appreciation *relation* to be determined by such a configuration. Clearly, the object may have that configuration and still fail to be appreciated for its harmony.

Thus, a defender of the indirect way of cashing out the phenomenality claim must assume that intentionality is monadic. Otherwise, the determination of intentional content by means of phenomenal character would say nothing about the phenomenality of intentionality itself. However, there is no advantage to endorsing the indirect way. For one may straightforwardly appeal to the *direct* way, which explicitly and standardly assumes that intentionality is monadic. One may directly claim that intentionality is phenomenal since, *qua* monadic property, it is determined by phenomenal character, instead of claiming that intentionality is such because its intentional content is

determined by that character. Thus, let me focus on the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim.

3. *The direct way of cashing out the phenomenality of intentionality – I*

There is an immediate manner to construe the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim. According to this manner, *intentionality itself* is identical with / constituted by / grounded upon / supervenient on – in a word, it is *determined* by – the phenomenal character of an (experiential) intentional mental state, i.e., whatever (whether sensuous or nonsensuous) makes that state a phenomenal state.¹⁰ Hence, the fact that, according to the indirect way, intentional content is determined by phenomenal character, is grounded on the fact that intentionality itself is determined by that character, as per the direct way. Indeed in this account, if phenomenal character is narrow, so is intentionality (Kriegel 2013a).

Once again, I will not question whether this manner of construing the direct way holds in all, or just in some, ways of spelling out the determination relation between intentionality and phenomenal character. If this manner holds, it holds in any of its formulations. Nevertheless, this manner has an immediate problematic consequence. Clearly enough, there are different phenomenal characters for our experiential mental states, to a greater or lesser extent fine-grained. First, if one believes that phenomenal

character is not only sensuous, but also cognitive, then there are two fundamental kinds of phenomenal character: a nonsensuous one characterising our cognitive experiences and a sensuous one characterising our sensuous experiences. Second, as regards sensuous experiences, there is a huge variety of phenomenal characters: i.e., intermodal vs. intramodal phenomenal characters, such as the generally different characters of a visual and of an auditory experience as well as the specifically different characters of different visual experiences. Hence, if intentionality is determined by phenomenal character, there must be different intentionality properties, as Kriegel himself (2013a:8) acknowledges. Yet not only would these properties be extremely various, but they would also be too heterogeneous, since the phenomenal characters of our experiential mental states can be not only extremely different, but also quite heterogeneous.

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality might reply that such a variety has limits. All those phenomenal characters have something in common, hence they fall under a common genus, which is what intentionality in general amounts to.

Yet falling under the same genus is not enough. There are some intuitively valid inferences supporting the idea that different kinds of mental states share the *very same* intentionality property, not just a common genus. Consider the following inference (A):

- i) Madonna has a mental image of a toyboy
- ii) Lady Gaga has a perception *of* a sexy guy

iii) Hence, there is a property Madonna's imagination and Lady Gaga's perception share – namely, *being of something*.

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality may rebut that appearances notwithstanding, if intentionality is monadic (A) is not valid *per se*. For if intentionality is monadic, there is no *ofness* that the two above intentional mental states share. The monadic properties respectively possessed by those states, *being modified toyboywise* and *being modified sexyguywise*, are just two different properties that at most fall under a common genus. Indeed, in order to restore the seeming validity of (A), one must add to it a further premise, which states precisely that the two properties are species of a common genus. In other words, one may account for the above inference by assuming that there is a determinable, i.e., a general form of intentionality, which has the different forms of mode-related intentionalities as its determinates (Kriegel 2011). Thus, one may account for (A) just as one accounts for the following inference (B):

i) This fruit is a raspberry

ii) That fruit is a strawberry

iii) Hence, there is a property both fruits share – namely, *being a berry*

that is, by adding to (B) the extra-premise that *being a berry* is a determinable whose determinates are *being a raspberry, being a strawberry* etc. (see Kriegel 2007).

Yet this rebuttal does not take into account what explains the intuitive validity of (A); once again, the fact that intentional mental states of different modes share the *very same* property, not the mere *kind* of property. Unlike the case, say, of one's walking and one's running, which admittedly are different species of moving, the ofness that Madonna's imagination instantiates and the ofness that Lady Gaga's perception instantiates are not different species of the same kind. Instead, they are exactly the same property, i.e., the *very same* ofness viz. the very same intentionality.

This fact sounds like a datum that *all* theories of intentionality must take into account. Indeed, for example, most naturalistic theories of intentionality account for it, by accepting (A)'s validity. For they acknowledge that there is a specific property of intentionality that the above imagination and the above perception share, by taking it as a tracking property (of a certain sort). Perhaps naturalistic theories of intentionality are wrong, as I am inclined to believe. Yet one may not dismiss them by saying that what they try to analyse in naturalistic terms is not the property of intentionality but another property, since intentionality is not a property that the intentional mental states mobilised by (A) share, but a genus under which the respective specific intentionality properties fall.¹¹ In this respect, I may part company with naturalists and hold that intentionality is a theoretical posit, not a property that one may pick up out there in the

world. Yet this brings no grist to the mill of the present manner of construing the direct way. For again, it is one thing to dispute about the metaphysics of intentionality, quite another thing to accept that there is such a property that all the intentional states share. This is what (A), in its intuitive validity, seemingly shows.

Moreover, there is another and more important problem for this manner of construing the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim. In itself, phenomenal character seems to have only qualitative features, since it amounts to the what-it-is-like of an experience. If this is the case, then how can it be what determines intentionality? As I originally hinted, the two properties seem to have nothing in common. What has the qualitative aspect of an experience to do with having an intentional content?

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality may share an intentionalist approach to phenomenal character (Bourget 2010), according to which phenomenal character is in its turn determined by intentional content (Dretske 1995, Tye 1995, Crane 2001).

Yet a friend of phenomenal intentionality is not forced to embrace intentionalism. She may claim that intentionality is determined by phenomenal character quite independently of any further claim about phenomenal character. In particular, even if intentionalism were wrong (as I suspect it is), one may still hold that intentionality is determined by phenomenal character.

At this point, the friend of phenomenal intentionality may make a very radical move; namely, to deny that, properly speaking, intentionality is the property of *having an*

intentional content. Granted, in approaching intentionality, we take it as such a property: the paradigmatic cases of intentional states, i.e., certain experiential mental states, are those that we so characterise. Yet once we have properly grasped it, we can dispense with such a characterisation. Feeling, as we do, that such states are about something is no guarantee that they have such an aboutness. Thus, if intentionality is not ultimately the property of *having an intentional content*, no wonder that it is determined by phenomenal character (Mendelovici 2017).

Yet this move works with items that, epistemically speaking, have been independently identified. In the famous Donnellan (1966) case, we take it that *this guy over there* is the man drinking a Martini. Even if it turned out that he is drinking water, or that he is not drinking at all, what we have already identified as *this guy over there* would still be what we are talking about. Yet, since as we saw before intentionality is not an individual given empirically, but a theoretical posit, we cannot rely on any previous identification device in order to fix what we are talking about independently of the theoretical qualifications we provide of it. So, if intentionality turned out not to be the property of *having an intentional content*, we would hardly have any subject matter for our philosophical discussions about its nature.

At this point, a friend of phenomenal intentionality may more moderately reply either that there are, or that there may be two basic forms of phenomenal character: one that admittedly has nothing to do with intentionality and another that is suited to having an

intentional character. Only the second form of phenomenal character, she may add, determines intentionality. As I said before, she may defend her reply both if she is an anti-intentionalist, i.e., she allows for mental states that are not intentional at all (typically, interoceptive sensations and moods), and if she is an intentionalist holding that even if all mental states are intentional states, it is possible in principle that some of them are not such. Either way, she may say that the form of phenomenal character determining intentionality has to do with the fact that, in one's mental states, the world *looks* somehow to one. Typically, this happens with interoceptive sensations. One's experience of red has intentionality *qua* determined by the experience's phenomenal character, which has to do with the way the world looks to one – that is, a reddish way (Horgan & Tienson 2002, Byrne 2009).

Clearly, however, this reply risks presupposing what it must explain (Nelkin 2001, Georgalis 2003, Bordini 2017a). If by appealing to looks one ends up holding that intentionality is determined by *a way of seeming*, then that seeming is already an intentional state. Indeed, it is the seeming *that* so and so is the case: this seeming has certain accuracy conditions (Siewert 1998). Yet, these conditions are hard to tell from the satisfaction conditions an intentional state has by virtue of its being intentional.

A friend of phenomenal intentionality may immediately retort that the way the world looks to one, which features the phenomenal character of one's experiential mental state, does not involve *that* kind of seeming, i.e., an *epistemic* look. Instead, it involves

another kind of seeming, i.e., a *phenomenal* look: what constitutes the what-it-is-like of that state, as Farkas (2006) underlines.

Now, as Farkas herself holds, a phenomenal look constitutes precisely the phenomenal character of an experience. But, if this is the case, that look at most contributes to *presenting* the object of one's (experiential) mental state, it gives the phenomenal character of that state a *presentational* aspect. However, having a presentational aspect has in itself nothing to do with having a *representational* aspect, or in other words with having intentionality. Disjunctivists on perceptual experiences, for example, allow for genuine perceptions to have a presentational character, insofar as they are in a presentational relation with the world (e.g. Fish 2009). Yet they would forcefully deny that their having that character allows such experiences to have intentionality. Independently of whether disjunctivists are right about perceptual experiences, this clearly shows that an (experiential) mental state's having a phenomenal look, or in other terms, presenting something, cannot determine its being about something, or more generally its having an intentional content: in a nutshell, its having intentionality.

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality may rebut that the presentational aspect embedded in the phenomenal character of *perceptual* experiences contains a further element that is relevant for intentionality purposes; namely, *phenomenal objectivity*, i.e., the fact that in such experiences, objects are presented as *mind-independent*

entities. In showing how such experiences are phenomenally objective, this phenomenal element also shows how they are intentional (Masrour 2013).

This rebuttal definitely enables one to tell the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences from that of other sensuous experiences that are not perceptual (e.g., moods). Yet first, this rejoinder provides no answer as to how *nonsensuous* yet experiential cognitive intentional states, hence states that are not perceptual at all, are intentional.¹² Second and more importantly, phenomenal objectivity only articulates the phenomenological fact that, as to their phenomenal character, perceptual experiences come with a *feeling of presence*, i.e., with the fact that their objects are *felt as being out there*.¹³ Thus, in better articulating how perceptual experiences can be presentational in their phenomenal character, phenomenal objectivity has nevertheless nothing to do with intentionality as such.

Let me take stock. I have considered various ways in which the first manner of construing the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claims may be articulated, in response to the problems that it raises: in particular, heterogeneity of phenomenal character, in spite of the fact that all (experiential) mental states share the very same property of intentionality, and extraneousness of phenomenal character to intentionality. Yet none of these ways seems satisfactory. At this point, we are back where we started from: how can phenomenal character determine intentionality?

4. *The direct way of cashing out the phenomenality of intentionality – II*

A friend of phenomenal intentionality may stress another manner of construing the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim. Instead of looking for a phenomenal character, either sensuous or cognitive, that determines intentionality, that friend may ascribe to *intentionality itself* a *sui generis* phenomenal nature. No matter how the phenomenal character of one's (experiential) intentional mental state is further constituted, she may say, intentionality has *in itself* a *sui generis* phenomenal nature. Hence, it gives its own *specific* contribution to the *overall* phenomenal character of that state. By so doing, intentionality works just like other phenomenal features that may contribute to that overall character. Consider e.g. the feeling of familiarity. No matter how the phenomenal character of an experiential mental state involving that feeling is further constituted, that feeling provides a specific contribution to it. A perceptual experience of a round, yellow soccer ball that is familiar to one and a perceptual experience of an oval, brown rugby ball that is familiar to one are two phenomenally different experiences that however, unlike the perceptual experience of an alien object, share the feeling of familiarity towards the different objects they are about. Likewise, the friend of phenomenal intentionality may say that these three perceptual experiences are phenomenally different experiences that however phenomenally share the fact that they are experiences *of something*.

In this respect, various proposals come to the fore in the phenomenal intentionality camp. Intentionality may be a) the property for the subject of a certain (experiential) intentional mental state *to be presented* the object the state is about, its *intentional object* as the tradition labels it; the object is intentional *for* someone (McGinn 1988), or b) the property for that state *to be taken as involving something* (Strawson 2004), or even c) the property for that state *to be felt to be directed upon something* (Loar 2003). Yet no such proposal really works.

As regards proposal a), its main problem is not only that it is unclear how an intentional object's being present to a subject must be spelled out, but also that none of the plausible options for spelling it out is satisfying. Four interpretations immediately come to mind, the last one being the one that has most been pursued in the literature. Yet none of them seemingly works.

The first interpretation of an intentional object's *being present* to a subject is a Fregean one: an intentional object is present to someone iff that object is *given* to that someone under *a mode of presentation*.

Yet this givenness does not have to do with a phenomenal property of the relevant intentional mental state, but rather with one of the features that qualify intentionality itself, i.e., its *aspectuality*; namely, the fact that the intentional object of one's intentional mental state is given in aspectual terms. Indeed, aspectuality *per se* has

nothing to do with phenomenality. On the one hand, phenomenality is a *subjective* feature of a mental state that may affect its *mode*, the kind of state that state is. On the other hand, aspectuality is an *objective* feature that affects the intentional content of that state.¹⁴ Along with Chalmers (2004), *objective modes* of presentation, which are aspects of objects, are not *subjective manners* of presentation, i.e., the phenomenal features of experiences that manifest corresponding sensible properties of objects. For different subjective manners of presentation may correspond to one and the same objective mode of presentation.

Perceptual experiences make this point quite clear. The fact that an object may be given under different aspects in such experiences has to do with objective properties of it. Some account for this objectivity by appealing to the fact that, when perceptually experienced, the object has different *occlusion shapes*. Occlusion shapes are the properties for objects of perceptual experiences that are expressed in terms coming from theories of depiction. They are the object's shapes that, once projected on a plane that lies between the perceiver and that object taken as the subject of a picture, prevent the perceiver from seeing the subject by utterly occluding it (Hyman 2006). So conceived, occlusion shapes are objective properties of an object that have nothing to do with features of *the perceptual experience itself* of that object. Indeed, it may well be the case, maybe due to their different constitution, that different subjects entertain different perceptual experiences having different phenomenal characters, while

however still perceiving an object under the very same occlusion shape. Thus, different subjective manners of presentation may be involved in the grasping of just one objective occlusion shape.

In actual fact, one need not rely on perceptual experiences to grasp this point. As one may more generally put it, aspectuality is the mere fact that what one takes to be the intentional object of one's intentional mental state turns out to be a mere aspect of something else. In thinking about Hesperus and Phosphorus, Hammurabi took them to be distinct intentional objects, yet they turned out to be just different aspects of one and the same entity, Venus. Now, *being an aspect* is an objective property, i.e., the way an intentional object manifests itself to the bearer of a certain intentional mental state. Aspects are adumbrations, or facets, of such an object (Husserl 1970, Castañeda 1989). So again, a subject may entertain different thoughts about the same object given under the same aspect. If one allows for cognitive phenomenology, such thoughts may have different subjective phenomenologies even if they grasp the very same aspect of that object (see e.g. Bailey & Richards 2014:319,323).

A friend of phenomenal intentionality may then stick to a second interpretation of being present to a subject, a Russellian interpretation: an intentional object is present to someone iff it is given *simpliciter* to that someone (Priest 2016), or, put alternatively, it is something that someone is *aware of* – is *acquainted with*, as one may say in a more Russell-like terminology.¹⁵ Here the nature of intentionality seems to be captured in

phenomenal terms. Being *about* something for an (experiential) intentional mental state amounts to the fact that the bearer of that state is *aware* of that something.

Yet this interpretation does not work either. For one may say that for a bearer of an (experiential) intentional mental state, to be aware of the intentional object of that state is just to entertain an aware mental state (a *phenomenally aware* mental state, Block 1995) that is *also* about that object.¹⁶ This simply shows that intentionality has nothing to do with awareness. For the former is not analysed in terms of the latter. Indeed, cases of phenomenally aware mental states that are however nonintentional, if there are any (as I tend to believe), are simply cases of aware mental states that are not about something. Alternatively, by taking seriously the relational character that speaking of being aware *of* alludes to, one may acknowledge that *being aware of* is a relation that has nothing to do with the *being about* of intentionality. For, unless one appeals to some sort of magic relation of a given (experiential) mental state with an object, *being aware of* is a relation of *presentation* an object entertains with that state.¹⁷ Yet, as we saw in the previous Section, not only this relation may hold only in the case of perceptual experiences, not of all experiential mental states,¹⁸ but also it holds independently of the fact that such an object is also what that state is about. As various people rightly stress (e.g. Searle 2015), the presentational character of perceptual experiences has nothing to do with the fact that such experiences also have a representational character that allow them to be about an object. Either way, the interpretation of being present to a subject in terms of awareness says nothing about intentionality.¹⁹

Let us now consider a third interpretation, a Kantian one: an intentional object is present to someone iff that object is an object *for* that someone *as the subject* of an (experiential) intentional mental state.

Yet saying that an object is for a subject of a state amounts to qualifying that state as *bearer-dependent*. One may analogously say that a sensation is a sensation *for* someone: a pain cannot but be *my* pain, as people say. Yet again, this bearer-dependence of a mental state has nothing to do with phenomenality.

Granted, Kriegel (2009) claims that phenomenal character must be split in a qualitative (either sensuous or nonsensuous) and in a subjective component; namely, the fact that an experience is an experience *for me*. Maybe Kriegel is right on this. Yet the *bearer-dependence* of an experience does not amount to the fact that such an experience has a subjective character, whatever this is: a *sense of mineness*, as some claim (Guillot & Garcia-Carpintero forthcoming). Indeed, bearer-dependence is not a phenomenal feature at all. For, obviously enough, it is a *modal* feature.

In a final, fourth, interpretation, the object's presence amounts to a *feeling of presence* as regards that object: an intentional object is present to someone iff it is *felt* by that someone to be present, to be *out there*. Frey (2013) adheres to this interpretation by saying that the object is *phenomenally present*.

Granted, this feeling of presence has to do with phenomenality. For it contributes to qualifying the overall phenomenal character of an experiential intentional mental state.

In itself, it may even be more specific than the mere presentational character of a perceptual experience, for it has also to do with the sensorimotor aspect of physically grasping the experienced object (Matthen 2005).²⁰ Yet once again, not only, just as the presentational character, does that feeling qualify only *some* experiential intentional mental states, i.e., perceptual experiences, but also, what it contributes to such experiences is to better articulate the fact that they are *presentational* experiences of their objects, not the fact that they are *representational* experiences endowed with intentionality. Hence again, this sense of presence does not qualify intentionality.

This suffices to dispense with proposal a) of interpreting the second manner of construing the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim, i.e., with the idea of intentionality as being present to a subject. Let us pass to consider proposals b) and c). They are very similar, but for the fact that c), the idea of intentionality as feeling of directedness, clearly appears to make intentionality more phenomenal than b), the idea of intentionality as taking. Unlike being *taken* as involving something, which has a *doxastic* flavour, being *felt* as directed upon something clearly has a *phenomenal* nature contributing to the overall phenomenal character of an experiential intentional mental state. Thus, let me critically focus on c) only. It immediately seems not only that c) hardly suffices for intentionality, but also that it is surely not necessary.

First, *feeling of directness* hardly suffices for intentionality. Consider a *Ganzfeld* experience, in which one feels it to be directed to a uniformly coloured something,

whereas one actually entertains merely an experience showing a uniform visual field. Granted, that experience has an overall phenomenal character to which that feeling contributes. Yet is it also an intentional mental state?²¹ If a friend of phenomenal intentionality replied that *Ganzfeld* experiences are not perceptual ones, let me consider experiences of phosphenes, in which a subject seems to have a visual experience even in absence of light and yet there is nothing that experience is about.

Second, that feeling is surely not necessary for intentionality. Intentionalists claim that certain experiential mental states – interoceptive sensations, moods – are intentional states even if their bearers do not feel them to be directed upon any object. Perhaps this is a controversial claim. Anti-intentionalists would reply that, precisely because they are not felt to be directed upon something, they are not intentional (Bordini 2017b). Yet independently of what one thinks about the intentionality of interoceptive sensations and moods, many merely dispositional cognitive mental states – nonexperiential states such as nonoccurrent desires, expectations and beliefs – certainly have intentionality and yet they are not felt to be about something.

A friend of phenomenal intentionality has a standard answer for this problem. Phenomenal intentionality is just *basic* intentionality, the intentionality of experiential mental states that is *original* and not *derived*. Unlike experiential intentional mental states, nonexperiential intentional mental states have the latter, but not the former, form of intentionality (Kriegel 2007, 2011, 2013a, Horgan 2013).

Yet first, given the above inference (A), the distinction between original and derived intentionality hardly applies to *different kinds of intentional mental states*. For in (A) it is completely irrelevant whether the imagination that shares the property of intentionality with a perception is experiential or not. Granted, few people doubt that the original / derived intentionality distinction exists.²² Yet the plausibility of inference (A) corroborates the traditional idea that this distinction must concern *all* intentional mental states on the one hand, taken as all having original intentionality, and nonmental things on the other hand, such as languages and pictures, taken as just having derived intentionality (Dretske 1995, Fodor 1990, Searle 1982).

Second, even if this standard answer worked on the friend of phenomenal intentionality's part, it would not manage to ground the alleged *sui generis* phenomenal nature of intentionality. To start with, let us suppose, for argument's sake, that intentionality is a phenomenal property for only *some* intentional mental states, i.e., the experiential ones, which thereby have *original* intentionality, whereas the other intentional mental states, i.e., the nonexperiential ones, have only *derived* intentionality. Yet this move provides a distinction *in the modes of predication* of a certain property, not *in the kinds of properties* that are predicated of those states respectively. Indeed, when intentionality is ascribed to language and pictures, these items come to possess *the very same property* that intentional mental states already possess. It is then awkward to say that in being intentional, nonexperiential mental states possess a different property from experiential mental states.

To better understand this point, consider first of all a different property, *regality*. Take a king and a viceroy. One may say that the king possesses *regality* originally, while when he acts a king, the viceroy possesses it only derivatively. Yet this does not mean that the two individuals possess different properties. It only means that to the former is ascribed in a certain way the very same property that is ascribed to the latter in another way: the king governs by his own rights, the viceroy governs in the name of the king.

Moreover, consider the following intuitively valid inference (C):

- i) Hammurabi dispositionally believes *in* Hesperus
- ii) Hammurabi has an occurrent perception *of* Hesperus
- iii) Oedipus dispositionally longs *for* Jocasta
- iv) Oedipus occurrently craves *for* Jocasta
- v) Hence, there is a property all these mental states share.

If the original/derived intentionality distinction were a difference in kind of properties, (C) would be invalid. For the nonexperiential states designated in (C)'s premises i) and iii) respectively would mobilise a property different from the property mobilised by the experiential states designated in (C)'s premise ii) and iv). Yet (C) is hardly invalid. For consider the anaphoric links pointing to an identity in intentional content that occur in

the following attitude reports reformulating (C)'s i) and ii) and (C)'s iii) and iv) respectively. Such links plausibly suggest that those premises mobilise just one property:

- (1) Hammurabi perceives *what* he has believed in all along, namely Hesperus
- (2) Oedipus craves for *what* he has longed for all along, namely Jocasta.²³

On behalf of the friend of phenomenal intentionality, Kriegel (2011:207) replies that the distinction between original and derived intentionality can be indifferently taken either as a difference in kind of properties or as a difference in modes of entertaining the very same property. For, he says, such accounts are interdefinable. Having such different properties is the same as having a genus, intentionality, in different ways. Thus, having intentionality in the derived way is for some intentional mental states, i.e., the nonexperiential ones, the same as having a *certain* property; having intentionality in the original way is for the other intentional mental states, i.e., the experiential ones, the same as having *another* property.

Yet this reply does not work. Taken as a difference in the modes of predication, the difference between original and derived *F*, whatever *F* is, is not a difference in the ways for *F* to be *possessed*, but rather in the ways for *F* to be *ascribed*. Indeed, being derived for intentionality cannot be the same as being possessed in a certain way. This would mean to treating the original / derived distinction just as we treat a different distinction;

namely, the distinction between *genuine* and *as-if* intentionality. As Searle (1992:78-82) originally clarified, these two distinctions are indeed different. Now, the second distinction is precisely a distinction in the way intentionality is possessed: either literally or somehow metaphorically. Something having as-if intentionality possesses intentionality in the same way as a toy-duck is a duck: that is, in a modified way. All in all, therefore, for *F* to be derived is not the same as for something to possess a species of a more general property.²⁴

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality can try another strategy in order to defend the *sui generis* phenomenal nature of what she takes to be basic intentionality. She may again say that the intentionality of nonexperiential mental states differs from that of experiential mental states; unlike the former, the latter is phenomenal. For unlike the latter, the former lacks *aspectuality*, i.e., the fact, as we saw, that the intentional object of an intentional mental state is given in aspectual terms. And aspectuality is a feature of conscious, i.e., *experiential* intentional mental states (Searle 1992).

Yet to begin with, this strategy does not sound appealing to all friends of phenomenal intentionality. As Kriegel himself (2003) admits, there is unconscious aspectuality. Witness the fact that relevant differences in agential behavior may depend on the agent's having different nonexperiential mental states that she fails to recognise as involving the same thing. Thus, aspectuality hardly grounds the idea that basic intentionality has a phenomenal nature. Again, this is hardly surprising. For, as we saw

in the previous Section, aspectuality in itself has nothing to do with phenomenality, hence with subjective factors, but rather with objective factors, i.e., aspects of objects.

Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality might reply that unlike experiential mental states, nonexperiential mental states merely have derived aspectuality.

First, however, this reply might ground the claim that nonexperiential mental states do not properly possess intentionality, only if the distinction between original and derived aspectuality were a distinction between *different kinds* of properties. But so meant, the distinction would fail for the same reasons that made the distinction between original and derived intentionality, so meant, fail as well.

Second, there is another linguistic argument showing that there is a *crossconsciential* aspectual constancy. Hence, just one and the same form of aspectuality spreads across both experiential and nonexperiential intentional mental states. Consider indeed the following more refined attitude reports:

(3) Hammurabi realises *what* he has believed all along, namely that Hesperus (not Phosphorus) has a certain position in the evening sky

(4) Oedipus craves for *what* he has desired all along, namely to have an intimate relationship with Jocasta (not with Mummy)

(3)-(4) show that both experiential and nonexperiential intentional mental states have the same *aspect-sensitive* intentional content. Yet such states could not have *that* very same content not only whether only the former states had aspectuality, but also whether the former states had a different kind of aspectuality from the latter ones. Thus, both kinds of states entertain *the same form of intentionality* as qualified by *the same form of aspectuality*. Hence again, this attempt at showing that there is a form of intentionality, basic intentionality, which *qua* original intentionality, unlike nonbasic intentionality, has a phenomenal nature (in terms of feeling of directness), ultimately fails, too.

At this point, a friend of phenomenal intentionality may appeal to a more radical move in order to defend proposal c) for intentionality as a *sui generis* phenomenal property. Nonexperiential intentional mental states, she may say, do not constitute a counterexample to the necessity conditions for intentionality to be a *sui generis* phenomenal property. For, appearances notwithstanding, they do not have intentionality *at all*, not even in a derived sense. Granted, they are in informational relation with the nearby environment. Yet this does not amount to their having the very property of intentionality (Strawson 2004, Mendelovici 2017).

Yet this radicalisation seems to be even more untenable than the appeal to the original/derived distinction. For it can in no way account for the validity of the above inferences (A) and (C). Thus, also c) ultimately founders.

Let me take stock again. Not only the first, but also the second manner of construing the direct way of cashing out the phenomenality claim does not work. For there is no convincing way of explaining what the *sui generis* phenomenal nature of intentionality amounts to. Taking intentionality as involving presentness does not work. And taking intentionality as involving a feeling of directedness does not provide necessary conditions of intentionality. A friend of phenomenal intentionality may attempt to avoid this result by appealing either to distinguishing between basic phenomenal intentionality and nonbasic nonphenomenal intentionality or to dispensing altogether with intentionality for nonexperiential cognitive states. Yet neither appeal works.

5. Conclusion

In the end, we are left with no legitimate motives for endorsing the phenomenality claim. The indirect way of cashing out the claim is superfluous. For it could work only if the very property of intentionality were monadic. But then there would be no need to appeal to such a way. For one may construe the phenomenality claim directly in terms of a determination of the intentionality property by means of phenomenal character. Yet the direct way of cashing out the claim, either by appealing to a determination of intentionality by the *ordinary* phenomenal character of experiential intentional mental states or by construing intentionality directly as a *sui generis* phenomenal property

(thereby giving its own contribution to the overall phenomenal character of the relevant state), does not work either.

Thus, the research program that should be construed around the phenomenality claim, what Kriegel (2013a) labels the Phenomenal Intentionality Research Program (PIRP), ultimately lacks justification. Granted, this does not mean that we must return to NERP, the Naturalist-Externalist Research Program that Kriegel believes PIRP should replace. NERP was a research program very popular in the 80s and the 90s, for which one may “naturalise intentionality by identifying a natural relation that holds between internal states of the brain and external states of the world when and only when the former represent the latter” (Kriegel 2013a:1). Indeed, PIRP has the indirect merit of making manifest to anyone how deeply flawed NERP is. As Kriegel stresses, due to the internal unresolved problems of NERP theories, “the naturalistic promise of tracking-based theories [of intentionality] is lost, or at least jeopardized” (2011:149). Yet, how to properly construe a new account of intentionality that differs both from NERP and from PIRP is a matter for another paper (AUTHOR 4,5), or project.²⁵

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¹ There is a wide discussion on whether intentionality of reference is a sufficient condition for intentionality of content. Although I believe along with Crane (2001) that this is not the case (AUTHOR 3), for the scope of this paper I assume that it is so.

² Although in different forms, such people are for the most part ready to endorse the *phenomenal intentionality research program* (PIRP). PIRP is articulated in six theses (Kriegel 2013a). *Qua* phenomenal intentionality is: 1) *phenomenally grounded*, i.e., grounded in phenomenal character; 2) such that the phenomenal and the intentional are *inseparable*; 3) *distinctive*, i.e., qualified by properties of its own; 4) *narrow*, i.e., independent of anything outside the subject; 5) *subjective*, i.e., a property of representing something for someone; 6) *basic*, i.e., a source of all intentionality.

³ Independently of whether Brentano is a forerunner of phenomenal intentionality (Kriegel 2018).

⁴ No matter how this grounding relation is spelled out: typically, as an asymmetrical dependence relation.

⁵ For Horgan & Tienson (2002), the supervenience relation goes both ways: intentional content supervenes on phenomenal character and *vice versa*. Nevertheless, since they appeal to phenomenal intentionality, they acknowledge a priority of the phenomenal over the intentional.

⁶ For a denial, see AUTHOR 1,2. For Georgalis (2003), the appeal to cognitive phenomenal character to determine phenomenal intentionality as a whole is erroneous. In (2009), Pitt strengthened his position by claiming that the intentional content of an experiential cognitive intentional mental state *is* its cognitive phenomenal character. Obviously, this strengthening trivialises the individuation claim.

⁷ Horgan & Tienson (2002) stress that, in order for the supervenience of intentional content on phenomenal character to hold, that content must be narrow.

⁸ This is the case independently of whether the intentional contents involved in such switches are nonconceptual, as I believe (along with the people cited in the text), and also of whether the phenomenal characters involved are sensuous, as I also believe (with Nanay 2016 *contra* Brewer 2007, Kriegel 2011).

⁹ At least if intentionality is an *external* (i.e., accidental) relation, not an *internal* (i.e., essential) relation with intentional content. In actual fact, the distinction between intentionality being an internal relation with a content and intentionality being the monadic property of *having-a-content* sounds like a distinction without a difference.

¹⁰ Kriegel (2011) appeals to a dependence thesis; Mendelovici (2017) defends the identity thesis.

¹¹ Sometimes defenders of phenomenal intentionality toy with the idea that phenomenal intentionality is a property different from the intentionality property that tracking theories focus on (cf. e.g. Kriegel 2011, 2013b, Mendelovici 2017). Yet this amounts to changing the subject, rather than providing a different metaphysical analysis of the same property.

¹² Masrour seems to acknowledge this problem when he claims that, while perceptual experiences ground a *certain* kind of phenomenal intentionality, nonperceptual experiences ground *another* kind of phenomenal intentionality (2013:117-8). However, this claim brings us back to the problem of multiplying intentionalities beyond necessity.

¹³ Masrour (2013:130-1) rejects the idea that phenomenal objectivity is phenomenally intertwined with feeling of presence so conceived. Yet it is hard to see how he can reject it. For he also claims that phenomenal objectivity is *specific* to perceptual experiences, since other nonperceptual experiences that are also intentional do not possess it. Indeed, one may naturally spell out this specificity by stressing that the overall phenomenal character of our perceptual experiences inextricably entails that the objects of such experiences are given to us both as mind-independent items and as present, i.e., as being out there. Cf. Crane & French (2017).

¹⁴ Kriegel (2011:127-9) disagrees. Yet he allows for *aspectual* nonexperiential intentional mental states.

¹⁵ If acquaintance is conceived as an existence-entailing relation, it may be taken to obtain either if the intentional object exists, or *as if* it obtained if the intentional object does not exist. Cf. Kroon (2013).

¹⁶ This kind of *intransitive* awareness may correspond to what Dorsch (2018:4) labels *experience-directed* presence.

¹⁷ This kind of *transitive* awareness may correspond to what Dorsch (2018:3-4) labels *object-directed* presence.

¹⁸ Granted, a friend of phenomenal intentionality might appeal to a different, nonsensory, sense of presentation that applies to nonperceptual experiences, provided that there is any (Dorsch 2018:6). Let me put aside the fact that this sense would probably be one of other senses here considered. It remains that this move would bring us back to the problem seen in the previous Section of multiplying intentionalities beyond necessity.

¹⁹ Either interpretation of “being aware of” plausibly captures what Searle originally maintained in saying (1983) that the ofness of awareness has nothing to do with the ofness of intentionality.

²⁰ One might even say that such a feeling allows one to distinguish between perceptual and *imaginative* presence, since mental images also have a presentational character (Kind 2018).

²¹ For a similar doubt, cf. Frey (2013:74).

²² A notorious exception is Dennett (1990).

²³ For similar examples aimed at making the same point, cf. Grzankowski (2016:320).

²⁴ In (2010), Kriegel admits that the two kinds of intentionality just differ in the form of their ascription: unlike phenomenal intentionality, ascription of psychological intentionality (the intentionality nonexperiential mental states possess) is normatively bound by Davidsonian principles of charity. Independently of its truth, this admission does not threaten the fact that metaphysically speaking, intentionality is the same property across all intentional mental states, as Kriegel acknowledges here.

²⁵ Acknowledgements.