



## REFERENCE ONLY

### UNIVERSITY OF LONDON THESIS

Degree *Mphil*

Year *2005*

Name of Author *CAKEMAN, G. J. T.*

#### COPYRIGHT

This is a thesis accepted for a Higher Degree of the University of London. It is an unpublished typescript and the copyright is held by the author. All persons consulting the thesis must read and abide by the Copyright Declaration below.

#### COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

I recognise that the copyright of the above-described thesis rests with the author and that no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

#### LOANS

Theses may not be lent to individuals, but the Senate House Library may lend a copy to approved libraries within the United Kingdom, for consultation solely on the premises of those libraries. Application should be made to: Inter-Library Loans, Senate House Library, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

#### REPRODUCTION

University of London theses may not be reproduced without explicit written permission from the Senate House Library. Enquiries should be addressed to the Theses Section of the Library. Regulations concerning reproduction vary according to the date of acceptance of the thesis and are listed below as guidelines.

- A. Before 1962. Permission granted only upon the prior written consent of the author. (The Senate House Library will provide addresses where possible).
- B. 1962 - 1974. In many cases the author has agreed to permit copying upon completion of a Copyright Declaration.
- C. 1975 - 1988. Most theses may be copied upon completion of a Copyright Declaration.
- D. 1989 onwards. Most theses may be copied.

***This thesis comes within category D.***

This copy has been deposited in the Library of UCL

This copy has been deposited in the Senate House Library, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.



~~Intentionality & Experience~~

Gabriel John Taylor Lakeman

UCL

MPhil Philosophy

DISJUNCTIVE AND INTENTIONALIST  
ACCOUNTS OF PERCEPTION

UMI Number: U594099

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U594099

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

# **Declaration**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Gabriel Lakeman      1<sup>st</sup> April 2005

## Abstract

The claim that perceptual experience is intentional is often used to support a particular view of the nature of perceptual experience. According to this view, termed *intentionalism*, in having perceptual experience we are aware of physical objects, but this awareness does not require that there are any such objects in our environment. Intentionalism construes the presentation of such physical objects in experience in non-relational terms; being presented with an object in experience is not constituted by the occurrence of a relation to that object.

I contrast intentionalism with another account of experience, *naïve realism*, according to which perceptual experience of objects is constituted by relations between subjects and those objects. I argue that an appeal to the intentionality of sensory experience does not support the claim that perceptual experience is as the intentionalist maintains it to be. It is true that perceptual experience fulfils the criteria we can give for a state being intentional. But there is no reason to suppose that all intentionality is non-relational. And the general considerations that bear on issues of the relationality of intentional in fact provide some small degree of support for the alternative view; that the directedness of objects of perceptual experience is relational.

# Contents

<u>Title</u> .....	1
<u>Declaration</u> .....	2
<u>Abstract</u> .....	3
<u>Introduction</u> .....	6
<u>Chapter One: Perception</u> .....	7
<u>§1 Awareness of Objects</u> .....	7
<u>a. Perceptual Characterisations</u> .....	8
<u>b. Phenomenal Transparency</u> .....	10
<u>c. Conclusion</u> .....	12
<u>§2 Two Theories of Perception</u> .....	12
<u>a. Intentionalism</u> .....	12
<u>b. Naïve Realism</u> .....	16
<u>§3 Hallucination</u> .....	18
<u>a. A Kind of Hallucination</u> .....	18
<u>b. Intentionalism and Hallucination</u> .....	21
<u>c. Naïve Realism (1): Hallucination and Disjunctivism</u> .....	23
<u>d. Naïve Realism (2): Why Should a Naïve Realist adopt Disjunctivism?</u> .....	26
<u>e. Naïve Realism (3): Generalising from Hallucination</u> .....	27
<u>f. Naïve Realism (4): Causal Considerations</u> .....	28
<u>§4 Conclusion</u> .....	33
<u>Chapter Two: Intentionality</u> .....	35
<u>§1 Intentionality</u> .....	35
<u>a. Intentionality &amp; Directedness</u> .....	35
<u>b. Intentional Objects</u> .....	38
<u>§2 The Telationality of Intentionality</u> .....	42
<u>a. Relational Form</u> .....	42
<u>b. Problems for the Relational View</u> .....	43
<u>§3 Empty Terms</u> .....	46
<u>a. The Problems of Empty Terms</u> .....	47
<u>i. The Seeming Meaningfulness of Empty Terms</u> .....	47
<u>ii. The Seeming Truth of Sentences Containing Empty Terms</u> .....	48
<u>iii. Negative Existential Claims</u> .....	48
<u>b. Different Kinds of Empty Terms</u> .....	49
<u>c. The Problem of Intentionality and the Problem of Empty Terms</u> .....	50
<u>i. Meinongianism</u> .....	51

ii. <u>Salmon's Account</u> .....	54
d. <u>Back to the Problem of Psychological Ascriptions</u> .....	57
e. <u>Conclusion</u> .....	59
<u>§4 Back to the Problem of Intentionality</u> .....	60
a. <u>General Schema of Possible Positions</u> .....	60
i. <u>Strong Relationalism</u> .....	60
ii. <u>Weak Relationalism</u> .....	60
iii. <u>Non-Relationalism</u> .....	61
b. <u>Evaluation of the Positions</u> .....	61
i. <u>Strong Relationalism</u> .....	61
ii. <u>Weak Relationalism</u> .....	62
iii. <u>Non-Relational Intentionality</u> .....	66
c. <u>Conclusion</u> .....	67
<u>Chapter Three: Concluding Remarks</u> .....	69
<u>§1. Intentionality and Perceptual Experience</u> .....	69
a. <u>Is the Intentionality of Perceptual Experience Non-Relational?</u> .....	70
b. <u>Can the Intentionalist Appeal to Other Features of Experience</u> .....	75
<u>§2 Conclusion</u> .....	75
<u>Bibliography</u> .....	76

# Introduction

The claim that perceptual experience is intentional is often used to support a particular view of the nature of perceptual experience. According to this view, termed *intentionalism*, in having perceptual experience, we are aware of physical objects, but this awareness does not require that there are any such objects in our environment. Intentionalism construes the presentation of such physical objects in non-relational terms; being presented with an object in experience is not constituted by being related to that object. But why does the claim that experience is intentional support this particular view of perceptual experience?

In this thesis, I shall argue that the appeal to intentionality does not support the account of experience offered by intentionalism. In the first chapter, I shall first consider the claim that experience presents us with physical objects, and show how intentionalism allows for physical objects and their properties to turn up in perceptual experience. I shall contrast intentionalism with another account of experience, *naïve realism*, that also allows that experience presents us with physical objects, but does so in a very different way. Both by directly comparing them, and by comparing their responses to hallucination. I shall argue that the naïve realist is forced to accept a disjunctive account of perceptual experience in light of the possibility of hallucination, but that both can allow the presentation of physical objects in experience. This raises the issue of why we should accept intentionalism.

In an attempt to resolve this in chapter two, I shall turn the issue of intentionality. Through a general discussion of the issue, I shall identify some broad considerations that can be used to adjudicate between relational and non-relational accounts of intentionality. By distinguishing between possible accounts of intentionality, I shall argue that these considerations do not support the claim that all intentionality is non-relational.

I conclude in the third by relating the issue of intentionality to intentionalism. As there is no reason to suppose that in general intentionality is non-relational, the claim that experience is an intentional state does not support a non-relational view of intentionality. Furthermore, there is no specific reason to suppose that the form of intentionality present in perceptual experience is non-relational. In fact, the appeal to the intentionality of experience seems to support a disjunctive account.

# Chapter One: Perception

## §1 Awareness of Objects

It seems also evident, that, when men follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images, presented by the sense, to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion, that the one are nothing but representations of the other. This very table, which we see white, and which we feel hard, is believed to exist, independent of our perception, and to be something external to our mind, which perceives it. Our presence bestows not being on it: our absence does not annihilate it. It preserves its existence uniform and entire, independent of the situation of intelligent beings, who perceive or contemplate it.

David Hume<sup>1</sup>

Hume claims that we pre-philosophically suppose that mind-independent objects are presented to us in perceptual experience; that in perceptual experience we are aware of ‘external’ objects and properties. This raises two questions: (i) is Hume correct in this claim, and if so (ii) why do we pre-philosophically take experience to be this way. In this section, I shall present two considerations, the first of which suggests that Hume’s claim is correct, and the second of which suggests why this might be so. Together, these two considerations suggest both that we pre-philosophically take it that in perceptual experience we are aware of mind-independent, physical elements of our external environment, and that perceptual experience seems to be this way. Of course, Hume immediately goes on to claim that ‘this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy’<sup>2</sup>, but these considerations suggest that such a claim is counter-intuitive. The first consideration appeals to the ways in which we characterise experience; the second straight to phenomenal character of the experience itself.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hume, D., *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles, of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, M.A., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), p.151-152.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152.

### a. Perceptual Characterisations

In “Perception and its Objects”, Strawson asks us to consider how a non-philosopher would characterise his own visual experience. He notes that the non-philosopher would do so using her “full-blooded concepts of ordinary physical objects”<sup>3</sup>; the concepts of physical objects that would figure in the perceptual judgements she would make on the basis of her experience. On the basis of this, Strawson advances the Description Thesis: ‘that a proper description of our perceptual experiences must employ physical object concepts, that there is no totally adequate description of experiences in neutral terms’<sup>4</sup>.

Strawson’s employment of a non-philosopher in his thought-experiment is clearly aimed at getting us to consider how we pre-theoretically think about, and characterise, our visual states of awareness. So, I am currently having a experience of the sort that would lead me to judge that I am perceiving a laptop computer in front of me. Strawson’s Description Thesis claims that we *cannot* give a veridical account of this experience without using the ordinary concept of a laptop computer, a concept of an ordinary physical mind-independent object, which would also figure in the perceptual judgement I would make on the basis of the experience. And it does at least seem right that we would pre-theoretically characterise this visual experiences in terms of mind-independent elements of the environment: it is natural to characterise the visual experience as ‘an experience of a laptop computer’<sup>5</sup>. This involves the use of an

---

<sup>3</sup> Strawson, P. F. (1979) ‘Perception and its Objects’; repr. in Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.98.

<sup>4</sup> Snowdon, P. “How to Interpret “Direct Perception””, Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.61. The title ‘Description Thesis’ is also given by Snowdon. In Strawson’s words: ‘employment of our ordinary, full-blooded concepts of physical objects is indispensable to a strict, and strictly veridical, account of our sensible experience’, Strawson (1979) p.98.

<sup>5</sup> Strawson might be unhappy with this precise working out of the characterisation; his examples suggest that he would rather characterise it in terms of the perceptual judgements one would make *about one’s own experience*. So, we would characterise my experience as an experience such that it would have been natural to describe by saying that I saw a glass of water. This issue does not have a significant issue on my discussion, and I shall ignore it.

expression, 'laptop computer', for a physical mind-independent object, and does seem to be, as Strawson claims, 'really the best possible way of characterizing the experience'<sup>6</sup>.

Strawson's Description Thesis, if true, would support the idea that in having experience we are aware of mind-independent physical objects. The thought is as follows: the reason that our visual experiences can be characterised in these ways, in terms of mind-independent physical objects, is because we are aware of such mind-independent physical objects in having those our experiences. The claim that in having experience we are aware of such objects would explain why the Description Thesis is true. We can put the thought the other way – if experience does not so present us with such objects and/or properties, why must it be characterised in terms of them?

However, Strawson's description thesis is too strong to be supported purely on the grounds on which he advances it. It claims that we *must* characterise experience in terms of mind-independent physical objects if we are to give an adequate characterisation of that experience<sup>7</sup>. But all he appeals to is the ways in which we pre-theoretically do characterise our experience, and the ways in which we pre-philosophically think are the best characterisations. As Strawson himself accepts, someone who denied the Description Thesis could still agree that we do characterise our experiences in these ways, and that we do think that these are the best way of doing so, but that there are other ways in which experience can be adequately characterised.

Hence the considerations which Strawson advances support a weaker claim; that it is a commitment of our pre-philosophical understanding of perception that we must characterise experiences in terms of mind-independent physical objects. If we accept that we can characterise our experiences adequately in other ways, the characterisations that we pre-philosophically take to be the best would not be – there would be equally valid ways of characterising the experience. And hence they support the claim that our pre-philosophical understanding of perception is committed to the Description Thesis. And this suggests that we should take it as a pre-philosophical commitment that in having experiences we are aware of mind-independent elements of our physical

---

<sup>6</sup> Strawson, P. F. (1979) 'Perception and its Objects'; repr. in Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Strawson does allow that there are some experiences not characterisable in these ways; these are a different kind of experience. *Ibid*, p. 98.

environment. As already argued, this would explain the truth of the thesis to which we are pre-philosophically committed.

It is important to note at this stage that Strawson's claims about how we pre-philosophically characterise our perceptual states apply even to cases in which the world does not contain what the terms used to characterise the experience are terms of. I can characterise a perceptual state in terms of mind-independent physical objects even when there are no such objects there: for example, it is perfectly acceptable to characterise a hallucination as a hallucination of a glass of water. But this does not mean that the pre-philosophical view is committed to the claim that mind-independent objects are presented in awareness in such cases – it might be that we can, e.g., explain why hallucinations are characterised in terms of mind-independent physical objects by reference to the genuine presentation of such objects in cases of genuine perceptual experience. I shall return to this issue in chapter two.

#### **b. Phenomenal Transparency**

In the previous section, I argued that we are pre-philosophically committed to the thought that we are aware of elements of our physical environment in experience. This claim is supported by consideration of the phenomenal character of experience – consideration of what it is like to have a perceptual experience. The important suggestion here is that experience is *transparent*, or *diaphanous*. Tye expresses this claim as follows:

Focus your attention on the scene before your eyes and on how things *look* to you... Intuitively, the surfaces you see directly are publicly observable physical surfaces... None of the qualities of which you are directly aware in seeing the various surfaces look to you to be qualities of your experience.<sup>8</sup>

The idea here is that when we turn our attention inwards, and attend to how an experience is for us in introspection, what we find supports the claim that in experience we are aware of physical objects and properties.

---

<sup>8</sup> Tye, M. *Consciousness, Color, and Content* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), pp.45-46.

Following Martin<sup>9</sup>, we can distinguish between two different theses advanced in Tye's appeal to introspection. Both are evident in the above quotation. According to Tye, introspection reveals both (i) awareness of mind-independent physical objects and properties, and (ii) no awareness of intrinsic 'qualities of you experience'. Tye uses this second point to mount a direct attack on both sense-datum and adverbialist accounts of perception, according to which the objects we are actually presented with in experience are not mind-independent physical objects. Whilst this second point is an interesting one, it is not relevant to my current concerns, and so I shall concentrate on the former.

This first transparency claim is very intuitively compelling. As Tye claims, on reflection it does seem to be the case that what we are presented with in perceptual experience are elements of the mind-independent physical environment. But the first observation is one about what we are aware of in introspecting our experience; what we are presented with when we attend to the experience. As such, there is room to deny that the claim is relevant to issues about what we are presented with in having the experience. Perhaps, when we introspect, and turn our attention to an experience, what we are aware of is completely different from what we are aware of in having that experience itself. But this response is not very attractive<sup>10</sup>. Further phenomenal considerations suggest that what we are aware of in introspection does not differ from what we are aware of in experience: the mere act of introspection does not seem to alter our state of awareness. As Martin, remarks, whilst staring at a lavender bush, 'when my attention is directed out at the world, the lavender bush and all its features occupy centre stage. It is also notable

---

<sup>9</sup> Martin, M.G.F. "The Transparency of Experience", *Mind & Language*, 17:4 (2002), pp. 376-425.

<sup>10</sup> There is an interesting consequence of the claim that our state of awareness when introspecting is not significantly different from our state of awareness when not introspection, which undermines the second feature of Tye's appeal to introspection. Many modern accounts that hold we are aware of intrinsic qualities of experience present their accounts as error theories; although experience seems to present us with mind-independent objects and properties, it in fact involves presentation of different objects and properties. Yet if there is no significant change in our awareness between cases of introspection, and cases in which no introspection is present, why should it be any more problematic for such a theory that introspection does not reveal sense-data than that we are not aware of them when normally perceiving? Why is introspection important for the second argument from transparency?

that when my attention is turned inwards to my experience, the bush is not replaced by some other entity belonging to the inner realm of the mind'<sup>11</sup>.

We do not need to claim that consideration of transparency establishes that experience does involve presentations of mind-independent public objects. As Tye himself seems to accept, our experience could be misleading in the way it presents itself to us in introspection. But the first consideration of transparency certainly supports the claim that experience *seems* to involve awareness of mind-independent physical objects. It seems as if normal, everyday, physical objects such as tables, chairs, and laptops just 'turn up' in our experience

### **c. Conclusion**

Neither of these two considerations decisively establishes that experience actually involves awareness of mind-independent objects. Both are compatible with it being the case that experience does not actually present us with such objects. But this would not be a desirable commitment for any philosophical account of perception. As the first consideration establishes, such an account could be committed to rejecting the pre-theoretical commitments embodied in the ways in which we characterise experiences. Although we characterise them in terms of mind-independent physical objects, such objects do not actually turn up in experience. And as the second consideration shows, such an account would also be committed to it being the case that our experience itself is misleading. Although, when we attend to our experience, we seem to be presented with everyday physical objects, in fact we are not. Any account that denies that we are actually presented with mind-independent objects is thus an error theory. As such, it is unattractive. Perhaps there are reasons for ultimately abandoning the claim that we are presented with mind-independent objects, but it is not a claim that should be abandoned without good reason. In the next section, I shall consider two accounts of perception that allow that we do experience mind-independent objects.

## **§2 Two Theories of Perception**

### **a. Intentionalism**

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 380.

According to intentionalist account of perception, experience is an intentional state. A complete discussion of exactly what is involved in this claim must wait until chapter two, where I shall present my discussion of the wider issues of intentionality. In this chapter, I shall just give an account of the specific features of an intentionalist account of perception. To do so I shall discuss (i) how the intentionalist responds to the possibility of hallucination, and (ii) how this response differs from that of the naïve realist. In an influential article Harman presents a clear intentionalist account of perception. Harman writes:

Our experience of the world has content – that is, it represents things as being a certain way. In particular, perceptual experience represents a perceiver as in a particular environment, for example, as facing a tree with brown bark and green leaves fluttering in a slight breeze.<sup>12</sup>

Here, Harman talks of experience as having representational content. Perceptual experience presents us with awareness of mind-independent physical objects because it represents such objects. The effect of the notion of representation is to introduce a distinction between what is represented in an experience, and what is actually present in a subject's environment. To see this, consider the example of a picture of a horse. A picture of a horse represents a horse. But, unless we are in the Satchi Gallery, a picture of a horse is not, and nor does it contain, an actual horse. The ability of the picture to represent a horse does not depend on there actually being any horses present. According to Harman, experiences too are representational states. They have representational content, and it is in virtue of their having representational content that they present objects and properties to experiencing subjects. We can now see how the intentionalist account of perception is able to allow that elements of a subject's mind-independent physical environment turn up in the subject's awareness; the experience represents these mind-independent physical elements, and the subject is aware of what is represented.

An important consequence of this distinction between what is represented, and what is actually the case, is that the intentionalist is able to allow for the possibility of representation in the *absence* of what is represented. This feature can be made apparent

---

<sup>12</sup> Harman, G. "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience", repr. in Block, Flanagan, and Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), p.669.

by returning to our previous example of a picture of a horse. A picture can represent a horse, in virtue of having certain representational properties. But, it having these representational properties does not depend on there being actual existing horses as represented. There are not any unicorns, but one can have a picture of a unicorn. The non-existence of the represented object is no obstacle to such an object being represented. As Harman puts it, ‘the content of the experience may not reflect what is really there’<sup>13</sup>. I shall return to this feature of the intentionalist account in my discussion of hallucination (§3).

The notion of representation is not essential here. Some intentionalist accounts of perception do not make use of it<sup>14</sup>. As such, I use it purely for illustrative purposes only. But it is crucial to the intentionalist account of perceptual experience that we do not confuse what is represented by an experience, and what is actually the case in the subject’s environment. Presentation is construed as *non-relational*. Being presented with a physical object or property does not require that there be such an object or property in one’s environment for one to be related to.

We can now see how the intentionalist can respond to both Strawson’s Description Thesis and the first transparency claim. According to Strawson’s description thesis, experiences can be veridically characterised in terms of physical objects and properties. According to the intentionalist, experience represents such object and properties. And so, we can give a characterisation of what it is that the experience represents in terms of the mind-independent objects and properties that they represent. What is represented is determined by the representational properties of the experience. And so, in specifying what is represented, we will be specifying what representational properties the experience has, and hence how the experience is. My experience of a glass of water can be characterised as such because it is an experience that, in virtue of its having the representational properties it does, represents a glass of water.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.664

<sup>14</sup> e.g. Anscombe, G.E.M., “The Intentionality of Sensation: a Grammatical Feature” in R.J. Butler (ed.) *Analytical Philosophy: First Series*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965). There is a further motivation in Dretske’s and Tye’s talk of representation. They seek to provide a naturalistic account of the presentation of objects and properties in experience using a causal notion of representation. This issue is not relevant my discussion.

According to the transparency claim, when we attend to our experience we are aware of mind-independent objects and properties. The intentionalist can allow for this by claiming that in introspection we are aware of what the experience represents. The idea here is *not* to claim that in introspection we are aware of the representational properties, or representational contents, of the experiences. The first transparency claim was that in introspection we are aware of features that are not features of our experience<sup>15</sup>. Rather, we are aware of what it is the experience represents, what it is that the experience is of *in virtue* of its having the representational properties it has, and not the representational properties themselves<sup>16</sup>. Hence the representational nature of experience explains why it is that we are aware of elements of a mind-independent physical environment when we attend to our experience.

There is a further claim made by some intentionalists, namely, that the phenomenal character of experience is exhausted by its representational content. I'll call this *pure* intentionalism. It is important to distinguish pure intentionalism from intentionalism as pure intentionalism presents us with certain problems that need not detract from the plausibility of intentionalism *per se*.

Tye argues for such a position from the second claim of his appeal to transparency; that no qualities of experience turn up when we attend in introspection to its phenomenal character. According to pure representationalism, the only properties that have a role in determining the phenomenal character of an experience are representational properties: sameness and difference of phenomenal character is *solely* a matter of sameness or difference of representational properties. The disadvantage of such an account is that states that at least appear to have much in common in what is presented to the subject (and hence in what, according to intentionalism, they represent) seem to have different phenomenal characters. One can experience the same physical objects and properties in different sensory modalities, such as sight and touch. The experiences had in these different modalities have distinctively different phenomenal characters, but at least pre-

---

<sup>15</sup> See §1b. This claim can be placed in the context of the naturalist program I mentioned in footnote 14 – according to Dretske “[a]ll mental facts are representational facts”, and as causal account can be offered of representational facts, a causal account can be offered of all mental facts. Dretske, F., *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), p.xiii.

<sup>16</sup> See Martin, M.G.F. “The Transparency of Experience”, *Mind & Language*, 17:4 (2002), pp. 376-425.

theoretically appear to be of the same objects and properties. Similarly, one can have experiences of different phenomenal characters in the same modality; e.g. visual experience had before and after one removes one's glasses when one is attending to the same visual scene. And finally, the phenomenal character of experience differs radically from that of more cognitive states, but these cognitive states can also be directed at the same objects and properties that figure in one's experience.

One obvious way of responding to the different cases is to allow that what one is aware of is the same, but the way in which one is aware of it differs. Such a response is not open to the pure intentionalist, who must either find some difference in what the states can be said to represent, or deny that the states differ in their phenomenal character. The onus is very firmly on the pure intentionalist to show that this can be done. But pure intentionalism is a stronger claim than is required to allow that mind-independent physical objects are presented in experience in virtue of their being represented in experience. And hence, these problems do not arise for all forms of intentionalism.

#### **b. Naïve Realism**

There is an alternative account of we are aware of physical objects in experience: that offered by *naïve realism*. According to intentionalism, there is a distinction between the representational state with its representational properties, and the actual objects that are present in a subject's environment. Experience presents us with objects and properties in virtue of its being a representational state, not in virtue of those objects and properties actually being present in the subject's environment. This is highlighted by its modal consequences: the representational states can obtain without the objects they represent actually being present in the subject's environment, and hence one can have, e.g., an experience of a glass of water when there is no glass of water in one's immediate environment. According to naïve realism, no such distinction can be made. What is presented in perceptual visual experience is just the actual mind-independent physical objects and properties that are in the subject's environment, not mere representations of such objects and properties. The fundamental point behind naïve realism is that the presentation of objects and properties in perceptual experience is to be understood *relationally*<sup>17</sup>. Perceptual experience presents us with such objects and properties

---

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Martin, M.G.F. "The Transparency of Experience", *Mind & Language*, 17:4 (2002), pp. 376-425., Child, T. W., *Causality, Interpretation, and the Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Campbell, J., "Berkeley's Puzzle", in T. Szabo

because in having the experience of those objects and properties, the subject is related to actual objects and properties in her environment. These relations can be complex, encompassing many different elements of the scene perceived. This marks a genuine difference between intentionalism and naïve realism. When I have an experience of a glass of water, one that presents me with a glass of water, this is down to the fact that there is a glass of water in front of me; it is that very same glass of water that is presented in the experience, not a representation of one.

The modal consequences of naïve realism differ from that of intentionalism. According to intentionalism, when I perceive a glass of water I have an experience that I could have had even if there was no glass of water in my environment. According to naïve realism, if I perceive a glass of water, the experience I have presents me an actual glass of water in my environment, one that I am related to. My having an experience that presents me with a glass of water depends on such a relation occurring – I couldn't have this experience if there were no glass of water before me. My having a perceptual experience depends on some such relation occurring; my having a perceptual experience of a glass of water depends on some such relation occurring between me and a glass of water.

We are now in a position to see how naïve realism handles the Description Thesis, and the first transparency claim: I'll start with the former. According to naïve realism, perceptual experiences are relational states; they involve relations to mind-independent physical objects. Hence to give a full and accurate characterisation of those experiences, we will need to pick out those mind-independent physical relata of the experiential relations. We can do this simply by using our ordinary terms for such objects. This contrasts with the intentionalist account. According to the intentionalist account, we characterise what is represented in terms of everyday physical objects. According to the naïve realist, we simply use the terms to pick out the objects they are ordinarily used to refer to.

Naïve realism also provides a very straightforward account phenomenal transparency. According to the first claim of phenomenal transparency, when we turn our attention towards the phenomenology of our experience, we are aware of mind-independent objects and properties. According to naïve realism, such mind-independent objects and properties are constituents of the experience. And hence, when we attend to our

experience in introspection we are aware of such objects simply because they are constituents of the experience that we are turning our attention towards. According to naïve realism, the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is determined not by representational properties of the experience, but rather, it is a matter of the what actual mind-independent objects and properties are constituents of the subject's experience<sup>18</sup>.

A final point: many different kinds of thing can be said to be presented in experience. Because of this, it is possible accept naïve realism for some aspects of experience, and deny it for others. Various hybrid views are possible - for example, one could be a naïve realist about the experience of objects, and claim that our experience presents us relationally with physical objects, but maintain an intentionalist approach about our experience of the sensible features of those objects. This would allow that experience can represent the objects it presents to be other than they are. I shall not consider such hybrid views in this thesis.

### **§3 The Problem of Hallucination**

#### **a. A Kind of Hallucination.**

It is instructive to see how these two accounts of perception deal with cases of hallucination. There are many different kinds of hallucination, and attempting to provide an exhaustive characterisation of hallucination is difficult. Fortunately, an exhaustive characterisation is not required for our purposes. The idea is to see how the different accounts of perception are able to cope with the possibility of this kind of hallucination. It is not relevant to this problem whether or not the kind of hallucination we are considering corresponds exactly to our pre-theoretical notion of hallucination. The hallucinations that I will discuss are cases in which subjects *seem to perceive* ordinary mind-independent physical objects, but the seeming perception is *not actually a perception* of a ordinary mind-independent physical object at all. The following hypothetical example can help illustrate the features of this kind of hallucination, whilst also serving to render plausible the possibility of such a state.

---

<sup>18</sup> e.g., Campbell: “[o]ne a Relational view, the qualitative character of the experience is constituted by the qualitative character of the scene perceived”. *Reference and Consciousness*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). p.114.

At present, I am genuinely perceiving an ordinary physical object: my laptop computer on the desk in front of me. As I am having this perceptual experience, my brain is responding to my environment in a particular way. According to the neuroscientists, neurons in area V1 of my visual cortex respond to colours and differences in contrast (both spatial and temporal). They pass this information on to other areas of my brain. Now, suppose that on another occasion, neuroscientists manipulate my visual cortex such that it is responding in exactly the same way that it is now, and activating other parts of my brain in exactly the same way as it is now. Under such circumstances, and assuming I am unaware of the neuroscientists' experiment, I would respond in exactly the same way I do now if asked what I was perceiving. It is highly plausible that I would not be able to tell such a situation apart from one in which I was genuinely perceiving a laptop computer, either by turning my attention outwards, and attending to what seems to be presented to me, or by turning my attention inwards, and attending to how the state is for me. The induced case is indistinguishable to a case of genuine perception: it is a subjectively indistinguishable experience. As the case is subjectively indistinguishable from a genuine perception, it is a case in which everything seems, to the subject, to be just as it is when they are genuinely perceiving. So we have a case in which the subject seems to perceive an ordinary mind-independent physical object.

But the case is not one in which the subject is actually perceiving such an object. By directly manipulating my visual cortex, the scientists could induce such a case *even if* there was in fact no laptop computer in front of me. If a subject genuinely perceives an object, then there is such an object that the subject perceives. If I am genuinely perceiving a laptop computer, then there is a laptop computer that I perceive. The case I have described is one that can occur in the absence of a laptop computer, and so is not a case in which I actually perceive a laptop computer.

So far, I have argued that there are possible cases of hallucination in which a subject seems to perceive an object, but they do not actually perceive such an object. But a hallucination involves more than this: that we have cases in which no mind-independent physical object is perceived at all. At this point one might object - perhaps the scientists merely manage to induce a misperception of other mind-independent physical objects and properties, such as those of the air before me, or even of the apparatus the scientists use to induce the hallucination, and which is causally responsible for the hallucination. But this objection is implausible. The presence of the neuroscientists is just an illustrative device. We can describe cases such as this in which it is merely due to some chance occurrence that the visual cortex responds exactly as it does. This seems

unlikely, but surely not metaphysically impossible. In such a case no mind-independent physical objects outside the visual cortex are involved in causing the hallucination. It is equally implausible that in such a case the subject in fact be misperceiving her environment. Consider a case of total hallucination, in which there is no correspondence at all between the spatial and temporal locations of the elements the subject seems to perceive, and those in her environment. In such a case, there is absolutely no correlation between the seemingly perceived scene, and the scene the current objection maintains is actually perceived. Nor are there any causal connections. And hence it is just not plausible to claim that the subject is misperceiving elements of her physical environment.

To sum up: it is possible to have cases of hallucination in which a subject seems to see a mind-independent physical object. But, in fact, the seeming perception of a mind-independent physical object is not actually a perception of a mind-independent physical object. Although the subject seems to see a mind-independent physical object, the subject does not in fact see a mind-independent physical object<sup>19</sup>.

There are two features of my characterisation of this kind of hallucination that call for explanation. Firstly, I've refrained from characterising the hallucinations as cases in which *no* object is perceived; they are merely cases in which *no physical* object is perceived. On a traditional sense-datum account of perception, it is not the case that hallucinating subjects fail to perceive any objects at all. Rather, they perceive non-

---

<sup>19</sup> The discussion in this section owes much to Smith's thorough discussion of hallucination in *The Problem of Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). However, my characterisation of the relevant features of the hallucinations differs from Smith's. According to Smith, the relevant hallucinations are cases in which 'the subject seems to perceive a physical object, but where there is in reality no physical object which is the one he seems to perceive' (p.191). His characterisation includes some cases of illusions as hallucinations of the relevant sort, such as the Kanisza illusion subjects. In the Kanisza illusion, subjects presented with three appropriately shaped circle parts seem to see a triangle occluding three circles. The subject seem to see a triangle; there is no such triangle that is the one he seems to perceive, hence according to Smith's definition, we have a hallucination. I would prefer to treat this case as a case of misperception of the circle parts; as an illusion rather than as an hallucination. As such, it doesn't raise the same problems for naïve realism as the cases we are considering.

physical objects: sense-data<sup>20</sup>. According to a sense-datum theorist, if a subject has a hallucination of a computer, although there is no computer that the subject perceives, there is a perceived sense-datum. Such sense-data are present and perceived in all cases of hallucination. However, sense-datum theories do not deny that there are any cases of hallucination. There is still something missing from cases of hallucination that is present in genuine perception – there is no perception of a mind-independent physical object. Although I don't explicitly discuss and evaluate the sense-data account in this thesis, it is useful to have a characterisation of hallucination that doesn't beg the question against it, and in any case this feature of hallucination will become important when we consider how the naïve realist can respond to the problem of hallucination.

Hallucinations are not simply cases in which a subject seems to perceive a physical object, but in which there is no physical object present. This is because it is not a necessary condition on the having of a hallucination that there is no physical object present. In the above case, the fact that the neuroscientists could induce in me a hallucination of the relevant sort *in the absence* of a perceived physical object serves simply to illustrate that the cases cannot be cases of perception. But the scientists could induce such a hallucination *in the presence* of a physical object that is exactly as that I seem to perceive, and we would still have a case of hallucination. It is implausible to deny this; to suppose that the placing of an object before me causes the seeming perception to become an actual perception. The presence of that object is completely incidental to my having the experience I do. It follows that hallucinations are not simply cases in which subjects seem to perceive objects in the absence of an object. What is important is not the absence of a physical object, but the absence of any physical object *that is perceived* by the subject. Hence the cases are best characterised as seeming perceptions that are not actual perceptions. So, armed with this characterisation of hallucination, we are now in a position to see how the two theories are able to deal with hallucination.

### **b. Intentionalism and Hallucination**

As discussed in §2a, the intentionalist holds that experiences are representational states. They present us with mind-independent objects and properties in virtue of their having representational content. And the having of representational content does not depend on

---

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g. Jackson, F., *Perception: A Representative Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

what is represented actually being the case. So, the intentionalist can allow that one can have an experience that represents there as being mind-independent objects and properties in one's environment even though there are in fact no such physical objects and properties in one's environment, and hence when one is not actually perceiving such physical objects and properties. The intentionalist theory can therefore allow that in such cases of hallucination, subjects have exactly the same experiences, with exactly the same representational contents, that they have in cases of genuine perception.

As the intentionalist explains the phenomenal character of experience as determined by what it represents, she can allow that the cases of hallucination have exactly the same phenomenal character as cases of genuine perceptual experience, and for exactly the same reason. Both cases involve experiences with exactly the same representational content, and this sameness of representational content determines that they have the same phenomenal character. Given this, it is open to the intentionalist to allow that hallucinatory experiences exhibit the first feature of transparency, in just the same way as genuine perceptual experiences do. In attending to the phenomenal character of the hallucinatory experience, one can be aware of the represented physical objects just as one is in a case of genuine perception. The intentionalist can also allow that Strawson's description thesis applies to these cases of hallucination for exactly the same reason as it applies to cases of genuine perceptual experience. According to the intentionalist, we can give an accurate characterisation of an experience in terms of everyday physical objects and properties because in doing so we specify what is represented in the experience. Hallucinations are also experiences that represent the same everyday physical objects and properties in exactly the same way, and hence they too can be characterised in terms of everyday physical objects and properties.

This does highlight an issue about how the intentionalist should account for *genuine perception*. The hallucinations are characterisable as experiences with the same representational properties as genuine perceptions. The representational properties of this experience determine its phenomenal character. As already discussed, one can have a hallucinatory experience even if one's environment is as one seems to perceive it; as illustrated by the case in which I seem to perceive my laptop computer, and there is a laptop computer before me. In such cases, one still does not perceive one's environment. On the representational account, such a hallucination does involve an experience that represents one's environment as being a certain way. And in such a case, the environment is as one's experience represents it as being. Hence, it cannot be a sufficient condition for the having of a genuine perception that one has an experience

that represents the environment as being the way it actually is. And so the intentionalist must claim that there is some further non-experiential feature that distinguishes genuine perception from these cases of hallucination.

### c. Naïve Realism (1): Hallucination and Disjunctivism

The issue of how the naïve realist should deal with these cases of hallucination is more complicated. What is immediately obvious is that the naïve realist cannot give the same account of these hallucinations as he gives of the phenomenally indistinguishable perceptual experiences of physical objects and properties. According to the naïve realist, experience is to be understood relationally, as involving the presentation of objects and properties in the subject's environment. The cases of hallucination cannot be constituted by presentation relations between the hallucinating subjects and elements of the physical environment: they can occur even when the physical environment is completely different from how it seems to be perceived. So, although we have the seeming presentation of a physical environment, we cannot actually have the presentation of a physical environment. At this point, it is often suggested that the naïve realist should adopt a disjunctive account of experience. In this section I discuss how the disjunctive naïve realist account handles cases of hallucination; I consider whether the naïve realist is forced to adopt a disjunctive account in sections §3c-f.

According to a disjunctive account of experience, experience, conceived of as something present in both cases of genuine perception and in cases of hallucination, should be given a disjunctive analysis<sup>21</sup>. There are different types of experiential states; cases of genuine perceptual experience, and cases in which the subject merely seems to perceive his environment. Experiential states come in two completely different flavours; they are *either* cases of genuine perceptual experience *or* cases which merely seem to the subject to be genuine perceptual experience.

There are various ways in which we can formulate this disjunction; how we do so depends on such issues as whether we count illusory experiences as cases of genuine perceptual experience (after all, we pre-theoretically take illusions to involve the perception of an object), or mere seemingly genuine perceptual experience (as in cases

---

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., McDowell, J., "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), pp.455-479.

of illusion, there need be no object that is the way one seems to perceive one to be)<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, one can adopt a disjunctive account of perceptual experience without being a naïve realist. One can take genuine perceptual experiences to be states different in kind from cases of hallucination without thinking that genuine perceptual experience is constituted by presentation relations between the subject of the state and elements of her physical environment, relations that determine the phenomenal character of the state<sup>23</sup>. But the present interest in the disjunctive account of experience is that it allows the naïve realist to deny that hallucinations are constituted by relations between the subject and her environment. The idea behind naïve realism was that states that obtain in cases of genuine perceptual experience are relational states; they are constituted by the occurrence of relations between the subject and elements in her physical environment. By adopting a disjunctive conception of perceptual experience, the naïve realist can deny that that the cases of hallucination involve such relations.

In fact, the idea of a disjunctive account of experience includes more than is strictly necessary to deny that hallucinations involve such relations. All the naïve realist needs to do is claim that genuine perceptual experience is not partly constituted by the obtaining of a state that could occur in cases that aren't genuine perceptual experience.

---

<sup>22</sup> For example, Snowdon provides the following formulation of the disjunction: 'it looks to *S* as if there is an *F*; (there is something which looks to *S* to be *F*) or (it is to *S* as if there is something which looks to him (*S*) to be *F*)' (Snowdon, P., "Experience, Vision and Causation", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 81 (1980-1), pp.175-92; repr. in Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 p.202 Dancy). According to this formulation, illusions are classed with veridical perceptions; both are cases in which there is something which looks to *S* to be *F*. The other disjunct captures cases of hallucination. In contrast, Campbell claims that the qualitative character of a genuine perceptual experience is constituted by the qualitative character of the sense perceived (see footnote 14). This suggests that one could not have such an experience without the presence of the qualities one experiences, and hence that illusions should be distinguished from genuine perceptual experience.

<sup>23</sup> For example, one might take experience to be individuated in terms of demonstrative content such that sameness and difference of experience is a matter of sameness and difference of demonstrative content. Demonstrative content is determined by what is actually present in the environment; hence hallucinations differ from genuine perceptual experiences in their demonstrative content. Naïve realism would be a natural development of such a view, but is logically distinct from it.

And to do this, the naïve realist need not affirm that experience is to be given a disjunctive analysis. All he needs do is deny that we should view perceptual experience as a kind of state that could occur in cases of hallucination<sup>24</sup>. For simplicity, I'll continue to use the expression 'disjunctive account' for a non-conjunctive naïve realist account of perception.

Given that the disjunctive account denies that veridical perception and hallucination involve perceptual states of the same kind, the disjunctivist is able to maintain that genuine perceptual states are constituted by relations, and deny that hallucinatory states are constituted by such relations. Hence, the non-existence of an experienced object in the hallucinatory case is no obstacle to the having of a hallucination.

This also has consequences for the Description Thesis as applied to cases of hallucination. The description thesis claims that an accurate description of a subject's experience can only be given in terms of physical objects (and/or properties). This thesis is true for both genuine perception and hallucination – one can describe a hallucination as, e.g., a hallucination of a glass of water. Naïve realism can offer a very straightforward account of why the description thesis should hold for cases of genuine perceptual experience. Such experience is constituted by the occurrence of relations between the subject of the experience and the subject's physical environment. Hence, we use our ordinary physical objects terms to pick out the ordinary physical objects they are terms for. In doing so, we are picking out objects and properties that are constituents of the visual experience. But the disjunctive account cannot allow that the same is true in cases of hallucination. There are no physical objects and properties present as constituents of hallucinatory experience. And hence we can't be picking out such constituents in characterising hallucinatory experience using such terms. A different account of why we characterise hallucinations must be offered.

The issues regarding transparency are similar. The disjunctivist does not have to deny that the phenomenal character of hallucinatory experience is the same as that of genuine veridical experience. It is true that the disjunctivist explains the phenomenal character of genuine perceptual experience in terms the relations between the experiencing subject and the subject's environment, but as experiences are a completely different kind of

---

<sup>24</sup> See Williamson's discussion of the difference between a conjunctive and disjunctive account of knowledge, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.44-48.

state, this account of phenomenal character need not apply to the hallucinatory cases. However, the disjunctivist cannot allow that the first claim of transparency is true of cases of hallucination in just the same way as cases of veridical perception. According to naïve realism, genuine perceptual experience is transparent because what one is aware of are the actual physical objects that are constituents of the experience. There are no such physical objects present in the case of hallucination, and hence hallucination cannot be transparent in the same way. The disjunctivist can either offer a different account of the transparency of hallucination, or deny that it is transparent.

#### **d. Naïve Realism (2): Why Should a Naïve Realist adopt Disjunctivism?**

According to naïve realism, genuine perceptual experience is constituted by the occurrence of relations between the subject of the experience and elements of the subject's physical environment. Suppose that the naïve realist does not adopt the disjunctive account, and accepts that cases of genuine veridical perception, and cases of hallucination involve experiences of the same kind. Given this Common Kind assumption, the naïve realist obviously cannot allow that hallucinatory experience is constituted by the occurrence of relations to elements of the subject's physical environment, as hallucinatory experience can occur in the absence of any such physical elements. But, the naïve realist could still allow that the hallucinatory experience is constituted by the occurrence of relations. These relations would not hold between the subject of the experience and elements of her physical environment, and hence would have to occur between the subject and *non-physical* elements. This is just the account of hallucination offered by the sense-datum theorist, and as I pointed out at the time, it is an account of hallucination that the initial characterisation of hallucination left open.

In fact, given the common kind assumption, the naïve realist *must* make this move. According to naïve realism, perceptual experiences are constituted by the occurrence of relations. According to the common kind assumption, hallucinations involve experience of the same kind as occurs in cases of genuine perception. Hence, hallucinations must be constituted by the occurrence of relations. Given that there are no suitable physical relata, these relations must have non-physical relata, and hence hallucinations must be constituted by the occurrence of relations between the subject and non-physical elements<sup>25</sup>. But this position is not inconsistent with the truth of naïve realism.

---

<sup>25</sup> See Smith, A.D., *The Problem of Perception*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Hallucinations and genuine experiences would have radically different kinds of objects, but why should the kind of object that the experience is constituted by a relation to matter for the purposes of whether the experiences are of the same kind? The naïve realist can allow that experiences of qualitatively indistinguishable objects have the same phenomenal character. And as long as the non-physical objects hypothesised in the hallucinatory cases can be qualitatively indistinguishable from physical objects, hallucinations and genuine perceptual experiences can coincide in their phenomenal character. In general there doesn't seem to be a reason why sense-data cannot have the very same sensible properties that other objects have; for example, there is nothing contradictory about the claim that both non-physical sense-data and physical objects can be, say, red. As Howard Robinson remarks, conceiving of sense-data as mental objects, 'It may be odd to think that both a mental object and a physical one could share a type of intrinsic property, but no real reason has been given for thinking it impossible'<sup>26</sup>. And so, the mere possibility of hallucination does not force the naïve realist account to adopt disjunctivism.

### **e. Naïve Realism (3): Generalising from Hallucination**

The mere possibility of hallucination does not require a naïve realist to reject the common kind assumption. But it does force the naïve realist to accept that cases of hallucination involve presentation of non-physical objects. Smith suggests we continue the argument via the addition of a 'generalising stage'. This stage attempts to establish that 'what holds true of possible hallucination goes for all perceptual experience'<sup>27</sup>; and hence that the naïve realist who maintains the common kind assumption must accept that in cases of genuine perception, subjects also only presented with non-physical objects.

Smith seems to present such a generalising step that relies on sameness of phenomenal character: In short, if we believe that a hallucinating subject is aware of a non-normal object, it is *only* because hallucination is, or involves, a sensory state. It is specifically the sensory character of such experiences that means that we are being genuinely *confronted by* a qualitatively characterised, non-normal object. Since genuine perception

---

<sup>26</sup> Robinson, H., *Perception*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.88.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, A.D., *The Problem of Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.194. See the rest of chapter 7 for an in-depth discussion of the argument from hallucination, particular with respect to the need to divide the argument into an intermediary, and a generalising stage.

differs from hallucination only in that more is present, any perception includes awareness of such a non-normal object'<sup>28</sup>. One could read this passage as presenting the argument that (a) we posit a non-normal object of experience for hallucinating subjects only in virtue of the phenomenal character of such experiences, (b) that genuine perceptions have the same phenomenal character, and so (c) we must posit a non-normal object of experience in cases of genuine perception. However, although such an argument may be valid, the first claim is false. According to the argument from hallucination, it is not only in virtue of phenomenal considerations that a non-normal object of experience is posited in hallucinatory cases. Phenomenal considerations, if they apply at all, support only the claim that hallucinations are states of the same kind as genuine perceptual experiences, hence that they are relational, and hence that there is *some* experienced object. The claim that this object of awareness is a non-normal object follows only from this and the additional claim that in cases of hallucination, there is no normal object of experience. There is no motivation to accept this additional claim in cases of genuine perception, and so such an argument fails.

The problem is as follows: phenomenal considerations may support the claim that hallucinations are states of the same type as genuine perceptual experiences, and accepting this does commit a naïve realist to the claim that hallucinations and genuine perceptual experiences both have a relational structure. But, it does not plausibly commit the naïve realist to the further claim that both states involve relations to objects of the same type. This would follow from the claim that experiences of different types of object must differ in their phenomenology, but given that we already accept that experiences of different objects have the same phenomenal character, this claim is implausible. Whilst this would be a valid argument from hallucination, it would be an uninteresting one.

#### **f. Naïve Realism (4): Causal Considerations**

Robinson proposes the following further causal principle, which he claims would support a generalising argument from hallucination:

“It is necessary to give the same account of both hallucinating and perceptual experience when they have the same neural cause. Thus, it is

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.206. In fact, Smith goes on to introduce causal considerations to support his argument similar to those discussed later.

not, for example, plausible to say that the hallucinatory experience involves a mental image or sense-datum, but that the perception does not, if the two have the same proximate – that, is neural, cause.’<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that Robinson’s formulation of this principle can be read in two different ways, only one of which is relevant for the purposes of generalising the argument from hallucination. On the first reading, giving the same account of hallucination and perceptual experience requires that we treat them as being states of the same kind<sup>30</sup>. Robinson supports this argument with the general principle, S, that “same proximate cause, same immediate effect”<sup>31</sup>. This strand of Robinson’s argument is not relevant to the current issue, as we are dealing with the case of a naïve realist who accepts that the experiences are of the same kind.

But secondly, and more importantly for our current concerns, Robinson also suggests that causal considerations support the view that hallucinations and genuine perceptual experiences have *objects* of the same kind. This line of thought is apparent in Robinson’s claim that ‘If the mechanism or brain state is a sufficient causal condition for the production of an image, or otherwise characterised subjective sense-content, when the table and wall are not there, why is it not so sufficient when they are present’<sup>32</sup>. On this second reading, giving the same account of hallucination and genuine perceptual experience seems to require that we treat them as having objects of the same kind, and given that the naïve realist is committed to claiming that hallucinations have non-physical objects, he must generalise this claim to cases of veridical perception, and hence claim that genuine perceptual experience is also of non-physical objects.

The most obvious way to construe this second argument is as follows: (i) the neural causes of hallucinatory experience are a sufficient condition on the having of a (hallucinatory) experience of a non-physical object, (ii) such neural causes are also present in cases of genuine perceptual experience, and hence (iii) in such cases they

---

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, H., *Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.151.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Robinson’s discussion on p.157: ‘I suggest that we have to be able to make sense of ... a common element not analysable into Hinton’s disjunctions’, *Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> This ‘slogan’ expresses the principle that Robinson claims lies behind his original principle. Robinson, H., *Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.154.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.153.

must also suffice to produce an experience of a non-physical object. Strictly speaking, this argument would not entail that there is no further genuine perceptual experience present in such a case. However, allowing that there is such an experience present would be to allow that there are two distinct experiences, one hallucinatory, and one genuine, both with the same phenomenal character. This would show is that the postulation of the genuine perceptual experience does no work – it is not needed to explain how things seem to be from the subject’s point of view – and hence is unnecessary.

The problem with this argument is Robinson’s assumption that the neural cases of hallucinatory experience are a sufficient condition on the having of an experience of a non-physical object. It is certainly plausible that we can bring about a perfect hallucination purely by manipulation of a subject’s brain, a fact I exploited in my initial characterisation of hallucination. And it is also plausible that the neural state I induce in the subject in order to do this is identical to that are had in cases of genuine perception. The thought was that one can bring about a hallucination by manipulating the visual cortex of a subject such that it is responding in exactly the same way as it does in a case of genuine perception. It is plausible that the bringing about of a certain neural state brings about a hallucinatory experience. And given that hallucinatory experiences are to be construed of as states constituted by relations to non-physical objects, it follows that the bringing about of a certain neural state brings about an experience of a non-physical object. But this does not establish that having of the neural state itself is *sufficient* to cause the having of an experience of a non-physical object. One could maintain *both* that it would be possible for the state to obtain in other circumstances which do not involve experience of non-physical objects *and* that in these particular circumstances, the neural state does cause the hallucinatory experience. Doing so would, however, require that we allow the same neural state to have a role in causing two different mental states, and so violates S. This demonstrates that Robinson’s second line of argument relies on S too.

But Robinson’s principle S is too strong a principle to appeal to at this stage. Robinson requires that neural states are the proximal causes of hallucinations, as it is these states that are uncontroversially present in both hallucination and genuine veridical perception. But many accounts of mental phenomena reject Robinson’s principle for neural states. For example, Putnam argues that some of the cognitive states of neurophysically identical subjects can differ in virtue of causal relations that hold between the subjects

and their environments<sup>33</sup>. As they are neurophysical duplicates, what Robinson counts as proximal causes will be the same for them, and hence Putnam is committed to rejecting Robinson's principle for the cognitive mental states he considers. The point here is not that Putnam's account is correct, and hence Robinson's principle false. It is simply that Robinson's principle cannot be taken for granted as a valid starting point in the philosophy of mind.

But we can present an argument that starts from similar causal considerations, and yet doesn't rely on the same proximal cause, same immediate effect principle. According to the Robinson's claim, certain neural states are sufficient to bring about cases hallucination. I have argued that all we are entitled to claim from consideration of the possibility of hallucination is cases of hallucination can be brought about by manipulation of a subject's visual cortex. Martin presents the following line of argument that proceeds simply from this<sup>34</sup>. He argues from the claim that 'we can bring about perfect hallucinations though appropriate stimulation of the subject's central nervous system' that the appropriate conception of what is experienced in the hallucinatory case is a mind-dependent one. From this he argues that the naïve realist must be committed to the occurrence of those in the other case. This first causal claim is entitled experiential naturalism. But experiential naturalism is much weaker than Robinson's principle S. It allows, for example, that subjects in the same neural states could have different experiences.

The thought is as follows: according to the naïve realist who accepts the common kind assumption, hallucinatory experiences are relational in the same what that genuine perceptual experience are. They differ from genuine perceptual experiences in that they are constituted by relations to non-physical objects. But this makes the having of a hallucination dependent on their being such non-physical objects for the subject to be related to in having the perceptual experience. Just as the having of a genuine perceptual experience depends on the subject being related to the perceived elements, present in her physical environment, so to will the having of a hallucination depend on one being related to perceived non-physical objects.

---

<sup>33</sup> Putnam, H., "The Meaning of Meaning", his *Mind, Language and Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1975).

<sup>34</sup> Martin, *Uncovering Appearances*, (unpublished), chapter 3.

Suppose that these non-physical objects exist independently of their being presented in hallucinatory experience. This presents the following problem. Manipulation of the local causal conditions brings about a hallucinatory experience. But, as the experience is constituted by a relation to non-physical objects, it is a necessary condition on the having of the experience that there are such non-physical objects present. Given this, one must allow that there is a correlation between the brought about hallucinatory experiences, and the non-physical experienced objects. There are two ways in which one can do this whilst still allowing that manipulation of the local physical conditions is enough to bring about the hallucination. Either the objects are already present, or the manipulation of the local physical conditions causes the objects to be present. But neither of these options is very appealing. The first requires that we postulate a realm of non-physical objects that are capable of entering into experiential relations in all conditions under which hallucination is possible. But this is scarcely credible. The second requires that we postulate causal connections between the physical world, and a non-physical world. In both cases, these commitments are based entirely on a thesis about hallucinatory experience. Neither of them are very attractive.

Given this, Martin suggests that we should reject the mind-independence of the non-physical objects, and allow that they are ‘constitutively dependent on the state of awareness of them’<sup>35</sup>. And from this the final generalising step of the argument follows. According to this conception of the objects of hallucinatory experience, hallucinations are states the having of which constitutes there being a non-physical object that the subject is related to in having the experience, and which in turn determines the phenomenal character of the experience. According to the common kind assumption, genuine perceptual experiences are experiences of the same kind as hallucinatory experiences. It follows then that the having of a genuine perceptual experience must also constitute there being an object that in turn determines the phenomenal character of the experience. No perceived physical object is constitutively dependent on the having of the genuine perceptual experience: the physical objects in the subject’s environment can exist independently of the subject’s experience of them. Hence, the objects whose existence is constituted by the perceptual experience must be distinct from the physical objects. So, there is a non-physical object present in cases of genuine perceptual experience that determines the phenomenal character of that experience. Again, strictly speaking, this does not entail that no additional physical objects are experienced, but to suppose this would be to suppose that there are two sets of experienced objects, the

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.27.

presence of either of which would suffice to fix the phenomenal character of the experience. If we reject that phenomenal character is so over-determined, it follows that in cases of genuine perceptual experience, mind-independent objects are not presented to the subject, and hence that naïve realism is false. Naïve realism is therefore forced to reject the common kind assumption, and deny that hallucinations are states of the same kind as genuine perceptual experiences.

#### §4 Conclusion

So we have two accounts of perception: that of the intentionalist, and that of the naïve realist/disjunctivist. Both allow for the awareness of mind-independent physical elements of a subject's environment in perceptual experience. How should we decide between them?

At this point, some intentionalists appeal to a general mental phenomenon; that of *intentionality*, or mental directedness. It is from this that the theory derives its name. The claim is the presentation of mind-independent physical elements in perceptual experience is just a case of mental directedness. For example, Anscombe claims:

“I wish to say that both these positions [naïve realism and the sense-datum account] are wrong; that both misunderstand verbs of sense-perception, because these verbs are intentional or essentially have an intentional aspect.”<sup>36</sup>

Harman presents another classic appeal to the intentionality<sup>37</sup>. In both these cases, the thought seems to be that simply appealing to the fact that experience is intentional supports the idea that the presentation of mind-independent physical elements of a subject's environment should be understood in non-relational terms.

---

<sup>36</sup> Anscombe, G.E.M., “The Intentionality of Sensation: a Grammatical Feature” in R.J. Butler (ed.) *Analytical Philosophy: First Series*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).

<sup>37</sup> Harman, G. “The Intrinsic Quality of Experience”, repr. in Block, Flanagan, and Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997). See also Crane, T., *Elements of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): “The way out of this impasse will have already been anticipated: we should deny that perception is a relation to real objects. Rather, perception is an intentional state.”

But even if we accept the claim that experience is intentional, why should this support a non-relational account of the presentation of objects in experience? The thought is that the general phenomenon of intentional directedness is correctly understood in *non-relational* terms. And hence, as perceptual experience is just an example of an intentional state, its presenting us with objects should also be understood non-relationally.

To evaluate this appeal, we must turn to a discussion of the general issue of intentionality. I shall do this in the next chapter.

# Chapter Two: Intentionality

## §1 Intentionality

### a. Intentionality & Directedness

To begin an enquiry into the nature of intentionality, we clearly first need some initial uncontroversial characterisation of intentionality. The modern problem of intentionality is often taken to have been introduced by Brentano, in his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*<sup>38</sup>, the most relevant section being his discussion in book two chapter one, and so this is this a good place to begin our discussion. In this section, Brentano attempts to find a feature shared by all and only mental phenomena; a mark of the mental. Brentano writes:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing) or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

If we are to use Brentano's account as a starting point for the discussion of intentionality, we should be clear which of the theses that Brentano advances we are, and aren't, subscribing to. Brentano makes a claim about intentionality here that I shall ignore in my discussion: he identifies intentionality as a mark of the mental. He does this because he is seeking to distinguish between mental and physical phenomena, in order to identify the subject matter of the science of psychology. I'm not concerned with the issue of whether all and only mental phenomena are intentional; it is not relevant to the

---

<sup>38</sup> Brentano, F., *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, originally published in 1874; English edition McAlister, L. (ed.), (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.88.

<sup>39</sup> Brentano, F., *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, originally published in 1874; English edition McAlister, L. (ed.), (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

problem of intentionality I am discussing, and so it won't feature again in my discussion<sup>40</sup>.

The most important feature of Brentano's discussion is his explanation of intentionality in terms of the mind's directedness: what is distinctive about intentional mental phenomena is that they are directed. And he gives examples of the kind of states that are so directed, such as presentations, and somewhat more cognitive states as judgements and desires. But Brentano makes two further remarks about directedness: he talks of the 'intentional inexistence' of the objects that mental phenomena are directed upon, and includes as intentional mental phenomena both those that are directed towards objects, and those that have 'reference to a content'.

The first point must be understood in the context of Brentano's wider metaphysical commitments. Brentano accepts that *all* the objects that intentional mental phenomena are directed upon are *mind-dependent*. This is true not only when we direct our minds inwards, to other mental phenomena, but also when we direct our thoughts outwards. Brentano is able to say this because he subscribes to what we can term, following Simons and Crane, *methodological phenomenalism*<sup>41</sup>. Brentano accepts that there is an external mind-independent world, but he also thinks that we are never presented with this world when we turn our mind outwards. For Brentano, the mind-independent world is transcendent; it transcends the phenomena that we are presented with. The phenomena that we are presented with are to be conceived of as some modern philosophers conceive of sensational properties, such as colours and sounds. They are mind-dependent, existing only when we are presented with them. It is these phenomena that are the objects of physical investigation, and hence, according to methodological phenomenalism, although phenomenalism is not in fact true, for the purposes of physical science, it may as well be. Brentano's claim that intentional mental states are characterised by the *inexistence* of an object is just the claim that the objects mental states are directed towards are mind-dependent, and exist in, or inhere in, those mental states themselves.

---

<sup>40</sup> This issue is taken up by Crane, T., in his *Elements of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and by Chisholm, R., in his *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1957).

<sup>41</sup> Crane, T., "Brentano's Concept of Intentional Inexistence", (unpublished), Simons, P. *Austrian Philosophy*, (LaSalle, Il. & Chicago: Open Court, 1995).

But this underlying metaphysics is not one that any modern writers on intentionality work with. Although we might agree with Brentano that there is a mind-independent world, one that exists independently of our interactions with it, the modern problem of intentionality arises from the thought that this mind-independent world is not transcendent; that the world consists of mind-independent objects, and we can direct our minds towards these mind-independent objects. There are such mind-independent things as tables, chairs, and cups of tea in the world, and likewise, I can direct my mind at mind-independent objects as I do when I form the desire for a cup of tea.

It is this underlying metaphysical picture that makes room for the problem of Intentionality, but this metaphysical picture is not one that Brentano would accept. And with it, the claim that *all* intentional objects exist in, or are immanent in, the mental states that are directed at them is not so plausible. Perhaps there are some mental states that are directed at such mind-dependent objects, but *prima facie*, not all are. And so the intentional inexistence of the object cannot be taken as a general feature of intentionality. Hence for my discussion I shall drop this feature of Brentano's account.

This leaves us with something more like the characterisation Mackie uses: "for one calls a state of mind or a mental event intentional meaning that it is directed on an object"<sup>42</sup>. According to this characterisation, the claim that a mental state is intentional just means that it is directed upon an object. As will become apparent in §1b, it is difficult to give an uncontroversial explanation at this point of just what such directedness amounts to. For now all that can be said is that intentionality *is* directedness upon objects; being intentional is just being directed. This is not to say that there is no more to a state being intentional than it's being directed. For example, many writers want to distinguish between different ways in which objects can be presented to the mind. Crane puts this clearly with his notion of *aspectual shape*; according to Crane, the same object can be presented to the mind in different ways<sup>43</sup>. This doesn't mean that it is false to identify

---

<sup>42</sup> Mackie, J.L. "Problems of Intentionality", in Mackie, J. and Mackie, P. (eds.) *Logic and Knowledge: Philosophical Papers* vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.102-103. Mackie in fact attributes this characterisation to Husserl, but from his discussion it is clear that he has something like this in mind (although he would distance himself from the strong sense in which Husserl understands directedness).

<sup>43</sup> Crane describes the following case as one in which the same object is presented in two different ways: 'The kind man who taught you Latin may not present himself to you as the spy he really is; the spy whom you meet on the secret mission may not present

intentionality with mental directedness; Crane accepts that directedness ‘is the heart of the idea of intentionality’<sup>44</sup>. All that Crane requires is that the claim that a state is directed towards an object doesn’t exhaust what we mean when we claim that it is intentional<sup>45</sup>.

### **b. Intentional Objects**

Given that we can link intentionality to directedness, the next question to raise is what it means to say that a mental state is directed. The claim that mental states are directed introduces the idea that intentional mental states have objects; if a state is directed, there must be something that it is directed upon. This is the object, or intentional object, of the state.

This point brings us to the second issue raised by Brentano’s discussion. Brentano talks both of reference to a content, and direction towards an object. Brentano includes the idea of content so that he can include the affirming or denying of something in judgement as an example of intentional directedness. It would be odd to say that what is affirmed or denied in judgement is an object, in the same sense as that which is presented to one, or that which one hates is an object. Instead one affirms or denies a content, and as Brentano takes a relation to a content to be an instance of intentionality, to affirm a content is to be in an intentional mental state.

But placing these two issues can cause confusion. The modern idea of the content of a mental state is linked to the notion of a *propositional attitude*. A propositional attitude is a mental state that can be ascribed using a statement of the form ‘*a*  $\phi$ s that *s*’. Here, *a* is a subject,  $\phi$  is a psychological verb, such as believes, or desires, and *s* is a sentence. Such ascriptions have complement clauses, ‘that *s*’, formed from expressions that could stand

---

himself as the kindly Latin teacher he really is’. Crane, T., *Elements of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> One way to make sense of this would be to conceive of intentional directedness as a determinable feature of which the different ways of being directed are determinates.

alone as complete sentences, ‘*s*’<sup>46</sup>. Mary’s belief that Tony Blair is Prime Minister, and my desire that I complete my thesis on time are both propositional attitudes.

Just as sentences can be evaluated as being true or false, so can beliefs. Mary’s belief is true, just as is the sentence that composes the complement clause used to attribute to Mary this belief. My desire cannot be evaluated as true or false, but it can be evaluated as being fulfilled, or not fulfilled. And again, the fulfilment or otherwise of my desire is related to the truth-value of sentence that figures the complement clause used to ascribe it. My desire is fulfilled if I complete my thesis on time, but not otherwise. Just as the sentence used to ascribe Mary’s belief gives the truth-conditions of that belief, so to does that used to ascribe my desire give the satisfaction conditions of my mental state. We can give a systematic account of why this is so by providing a relational account of propositional attitudes. That is, we can treat them as being constituted by the occurrence of psychological, or attitudinal, relations between the subjects and the propositions expressed by the sentences that compose the complement clauses. The idea is that ‘*a*  $\phi$  that *s*’ asserts that *a* stands in a psychological relation, *R*, picked out by the psychological verb,  $\phi$ , to the propositional content, *p*, expressed by the sentence *s*. This allows that one can take different attitudes to the same propositional content and vice versa, allowing a systematic explanation of the satisfaction conditions of the mental states in terms of the truth-conditions of their propositional contents.

This account of propositional attitudes treats them as relational psychological states. According to it, they are constituted by the occurrence of psychological (attitudinal) relations between subjects and propositions. But whilst issues that arise over propositional attitudes, particularly with respect to how we should work out the notion of propositional content, are of importance to the issue of intentionality, the question of how to understand direction towards an object is a distinct one. It is one that we can raise without reference to the notion of propositional content. For example, the psychological state I am in when I want a cup of tea isn’t one that I ascribe using a statement of the propositional attitude form, yet it is still an intentional state, and it is directed at an object; a cup of tea. This is not to say that propositional attitudes do not exhibit directedness towards objects. They do: Mary’s belief that Tony Blair is Prime Minister is a propositional attitude, being as it is ascribed by a statement of the form ‘*a*

---

<sup>46</sup> There are a few exceptions in which it wouldn’t strictly speaking be grammatical to use the complement clause as a self-standing sentence due to shifts in tense or mood.

φs that s'. But, this is still a mental state that is directed towards an object, Tony Blair. So, even bracketing the issue of how we should treat propositional attitudes, it is still true that propositional attitudes are intentional mental states, directed at objects. Rather than complicate the issues by dealing including issues of propositional content, I shall I restrict my discussion to this object-directedness<sup>47</sup>.

Now, in saying that intentional mental states are directed upon objects, I don't mean to claim that they are directed at objects in the sense of 'object' that contrasts with 'property', or 'fact'. This is because intentional mental states can be directed at many such different types of thing. They can be directed properties (I can think about redness), and events (I can think about the sinking of the Belgrano). Given this, the claim that intentional mental states are directed at objects is intended simply to capture the idea that as intentional mental states are directed, there are things that intentional mental states are directed upon. And so by object, I mean simply that which the intentional mental state is directed upon (or about, of, etc...). All intentional mental states have objects in this sense. Mental states can be directed at many different kinds of things. Furthermore, one mental state can be directed at more than one thing; if I entertain the thought that Blair is Prime Minister, it seems reasonable to say both that my thought is directed at Blair, and that it is directed at the property of being Prime Minister<sup>48</sup>. Intentional mental states are just those mental states that are directed at such objects.

---

<sup>47</sup> There are some important similarities between the problem of intentionality, and the problem of falsity; how it is that we have false beliefs (see, e.g., Denyer, N., *Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), particularly the discussion of Plato's argument from the *Euthydemus*., Chapter 2, pp.8-23). But there are moves we can make on response to the problem of falsity, using the notion of a structured proposition, that are not so easily applied to the case of directedness towards objects. It is important to note that some writers do not make this distinction (e.g. Dennett, D., in his *Content and Consciousness*, (London & Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), following Chisholm's criteria); my discussion applies only to what such writers claim about object-directedness.

<sup>48</sup> And perhaps even directed at the *fact* that Tony Blair is Prime Minister. Distinguishing thinking about facts, and thinking that something or other is the case prevents assimilation of the problem of falsity to the problem of intentionality. See footnote 41.

There is a sense in which the characterisation I've given is not particularly substantive, as can be illustrated by raising an objection. I've characterised intentionality in terms of the directedness of mental states on objects. I've done so in an attempt to delineate a particular feature of the mental, prior to a discussion of the logical nature of that feature. To understand fully the characterisation, we must to understand what it is for the mind to be directed upon an object. I haven't yet given an account of what it means to say that a mental state is directed on an object, and so haven't yet been given a characterisation of intentionality. The objection continues; the obvious way to do so would be to understand it relationally; to take it that saying that a mental state is directed on an object asserts the occurrence of a relation between the subject of that mental state and an object. But clearly we can't understand it this way; to do so would prejudice the question as to whether intentionality is relational. And so I haven't given a characterisation of intentionality that both serves to delineate it and is suitable to an enquiry into what kind of feature intentionality is. Underlying this objection is the worry that to properly delineate the phenomenon, we need to give a substantive account of intentionality, but that we won't be able to do this and remain neutral as to the issue of whether intentionality is relational.

I think that there is something to this worry. The question of whether intentionality is relational really a question about the nature of intentionality. As such, the issue is one of the metaphysics of mind. Given this, it is only to be expected that we can only go so far in providing a neutral metaphysical account of directedness upon objects. But, there is a simple way to respond to it: we can take step back from the phenomena, and switch our attention to the ways in which we pre-theoretically talk about intentionality, particularly the ways in which we characterise and attribute intentional mental states. The idea is that intentional mental states are just those mental states that can be truly said to "have objects". They are those states that can be characterised as directed towards, of, or about objects, as we do when we use statements of the form '*a* worships ...', '*a* wants ...', or '*a* is thinking about ...', where *a* is a subject. In all these cases, a mental state can be attributed by completing the statement with an expression that gives the object the state is directed towards. That the completing expression does give the intentional object is confirmed by the fact that the completing expression can be used to answer questions that ask what object the mental state is directed towards; questions such as 'what does *a* worship?', 'what does *a* want?', and 'What is *a* thinking about?'<sup>49</sup>.

---

<sup>49</sup> This characterisation has similarities to those given by Anscombe and Crane.

We do characterise and attribute mental states in these ways. And such attributions are sensitive to the intentionality of the states they ascribe, as they give the object that the state is directed towards. One can and should accept this whether one believes that intentionality is relational or not. And now, the issue of whether intentionality is relational becomes the issue of whether such attributions are made correct by relational psychological states; whether amongst the truth-makers of the attributions of intentional mental states are relational psychological states of affairs; that is states of affairs whose obtaining is constituted by the occurrence of psychological relations between the subject of the mental state, and an object that is the one the mental state is directed upon<sup>50</sup>. But putting the issue this way serves another purpose also presents a good starting point from which to articulate the problem of intentionality. Focusing on our pre-theoretical characterisations of intentional mental states provides reasons both for taking intentionality to be relational, and for denying that it relational.

## §2 The Relationality of Intentionality

### a. Relational Form

I'll start with the support for a relational view. Our pre-theoretical intentional attributions, such as 'Mary loves Tony Blair', 'Mary hates Tony Blair', or even 'Mary worships Tony Blair', all share a common form. Oversimplifying slightly, they are of the form '*a ψs o*', where *a* is a subject, *ψ* a psychological verb, and *o* the object the mental state is directed towards<sup>51</sup>. This common form *seems* to be a relational form. That

---

<sup>50</sup> There is a minor complication here. It is possible to hold an account of intentionality according to which such ascriptions of intentional mental states are never literally true, but are still appropriate ways of characterising the mental state, and are appropriate in virtue of a non-relational underlying mental state. For my discussion to encompass such a position, it would be necessary to present the issue as one of whether the underlying states in virtue of which intentional state ascriptions are *appropriate* are relational. For ease of exposition, I shall ignore this position.

<sup>51</sup> This oversimplifies the matter as there are some psychological verbs that can be used to attribute intentional mental states, but cannot strictly speaking be used in statements of the form '*a ψs o*'. For example, we say that someone has a belief about, or is thinking about, the table, not that they believe, or think, the table. In these and other cases, further

is, the attributions of intentional mental states *seem* to have the same logical form as expressions such as ‘*a* kicks *b*’, or ‘*a* touches *b*’ that predicate relations of objects. The expression ‘*a* kicks *b*’ predicates the occurrence of a relation between the two objects, *a* and *b*, picked out by the expressions ‘*a*’ and ‘*b*’. But the expression ‘*a*  $\psi$  *o*’ seems to have the same form. Syntactically, at least, it has exactly the same syntactic form. And so, it also seems to be picking out two objects, *a* and *o*, and asserting that a relational occurs between them, a psychological relation picked out by the psychological verb  $\psi$ . This thought is captured by Chisholm:

“These examples seem to have the form of relational statements. “Diogenes sits in his tub” is concerned with a relation between Diogenes and his tub. Syntactically, at least, “Diogenes looks for an honest man” is similar: Diogenes’ quest seems to relate him in a certain way to honest men.”<sup>52</sup>

The claim that ‘*a* kicks *b*’, being of relational form, is true only if the relation picked out by the verb ‘kicks’, that of kicking, holds between *a* and *b*. And this in turn suggests that there is the following condition on the truth of such psychological statements: ‘*a*  $\psi$  *o*’ is true only if there is some relation, *R*, such that *a* *R*s to *o*, and *R* is a psychological, or intentional relation.

#### **b. Problems for the Relational View.**

So, we do have ways of ascribing and characterising our mental states that do at least seem to have a relational form. And hence going on our pre-theoretical characterisations of such states, intentionality certainly seems, at least *prima facie*, to be relational. But, a problem for the relational account quickly arises. Despite the fact that our pre-philosophical characterisation of psychological states seem to have a relational form, there are three further considerations that suggest that in fact they in fact should not be

---

words are needed for the statement to be grammatical. However, the points about relational form still apply to such characterisations.

<sup>52</sup> Chisholm, R., *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1957), p.170

taken to be asserting the obtaining of relational psychological states<sup>53</sup>. In each case, the pre-theoretical use of intentional state ascriptions conflicts with what would be correct if they did have a relational form. Hence, to claim that the intentional ascriptions to which these considerations apply do have a relational form, one must deny that our pre-theoretical use of such intentional state ascriptions is correct. And so it can be argued that our pre-philosophical characterisations of psychological states do not in fact support the idea that intentionality is relational.

The first feature of such ascriptions is that they are *description sensitive*; pre-theoretically, we are prepared to assert that a subject has a mental state directed at a certain object when we use one expression to characterise that object, but not when we use another. We are prepared to assert, for example, ‘Louis Lane loves Superman’, but not ‘Louis Lane loves Clark Kent’, despite the fact that Clark Kent just is Superman. Asserting something involves committing oneself to the truth of what one has asserted, and so pre-theoretically, it appears that we are prepared to accept the truth of ‘Louis Lane loves Superman’, but not the truth of ‘Louis Lane loves Clark Kent’. And this threatens the relational account.

So, the conditions under which we are prepared to ascribe intentional states suggest the following is possible:

1. ‘ $s \psi a$ ’ is true.
2. ‘ $s \psi b$ ’ is not true.
3.  $a = b$

Suppose that our attributions of such psychological states do have a relational form; that ‘ $s \psi a$ ’ simply picks out an object,  $a$ , and ascribes to that object the relational property of being thought about by  $s$ , and likewise for ‘ $s \psi b$ ’. But, according to the principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals, if two objects are identical, then every property that is had by the one is had by the other (or, alternatively, everything that is true of the one is true of the other): if  $a = b$ , any property that  $a$  has is also one that  $b$  has. Therefore if  $a$  is thought about by  $s$ , then  $b$  is thought about by  $s$ . But this is just what is claimed by ‘ $s \psi$

---

<sup>53</sup> These three issues have been raised by many writers. Anscombe raises all three in her “The Intentionality of Sensation: a Grammatical Feature” in R.J. Butler (ed.) *Analytical Philosophy: First Series*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).

$b$ '. Hence one would expect ' $s \psi b$ ' to be true, contradicting (2). But this issue is not conclusive. Leibniz's Law could be applied to this case if the names ' $a$ ' and ' $b$ ' are functioning purely referentially; solely to pick out an object to which the rest of the sentence predicates a relational. The difference in truth-value between (1) and (2) could be explained by claiming that the names do not function purely referentially without denying that (1) is true in virtue of a relational mental state.

The problem of generality presents us with a similar conflict between our pre-theoretical grasp of the inferential properties of mental state attributions, and those under which they would have were the relational account correct. We can, and do, attribute mental states using general terms. The following sentence can be used to attribute a mental state:

S1. Mary wants a cup of tea.

But this sentence is ambiguous. It admits of two readings. One can either read it as making claim about a particular cup of tea; as equivalent 'there is a particular cup of tea that Mary wants'. Alternatively, one could read it as making a claim about no particular cup of tea; as equivalent to 'Mary wants a cup of tea, but no cup of tea in particular'. According to the latter reading, no particular object of Mary's wanting is specified. This generality of psychological attitude ascriptions presents a problem for the claim that such ascriptions have a relational form. Sentences of relational form can involve general terms, e.g.:

S2. Mark touches a cup of tea.

But this sentence does not admit of two readings. One cannot take (S2) as equivalent to 'Mark touches a cup of tea, but no cup of tea in particular'. Relations have specific particular objects as their relata. And so, as (S2) asserts the occurrence of a relation between Mark and what is given by the expression 'a cup of tea', this relation will be between Mark and a specific object. And hence there is no general reading of (S2). But general readings are possible of some psychological claims. And this suggests that the mental states ascribed by such psychological claims, when read generally, cannot be relational states. If we take (S1) as ascribing to Mary a relational state in which Mary is related to what is given by the expression 'a cup of tea', it should be possible to raise the issue of which cup of tea in particular it is that Mary wants. But Mary may have a general desire; a desire that is aimed at no cup of tea in particular, and would be satisfied

were I to be given any cup of tea. As Quine puts it, the man with a general desire for a sloop does not want a particular sloop: he seeks mere ‘relief from slooplessness’<sup>54</sup>. And this suggests that (S1) cannot be predicating a psychological relation.

And this brings us to the third and most influential issue; that of thought about the non-existent. Suppose that the following claim both (a) has a relational form, and (b) is true:

S3. Mary is thinking about Pegasus.

If the claim has a relational form, it can only be true in virtue of the occurrence of a relation between objects picked out by the names ‘Mary’ and ‘Pegasus’. And for it to do this, it is very plausible to suppose that the terms ‘Mary’ and ‘Pegasus’ must pick out objects which are the relata of this relation. If they do not pick out objects, we would not have any relata for the putative relation<sup>55</sup>. Hence, from the truth of (S3), one should be able to infer:

S4. There is some object  $x$  such that Mary is thinking about  $x$

But, as Anscombe’s claims, we pre-theoretically complete psychological state ascriptions of the form ‘ $a$  worshipped –’ and ‘ $a$  thought of –’ with empty names and expressions, such as ‘Pegasus’, and ‘the golden mountain’; expressions we are quite happy to assert do *not refer to existing objects*. If we take it that (i) these empty names do fail to pick out objects, and yet (ii) our characterisations of psychological states using such empty names are true, the claim that our pre-theoretical ascriptions of psychological states have a relational form is implausible. So, the next question is whether such empty terms do in fact fail to pick out objects. Discussion of this requires discussion of the general problem of empty terms.

### §3 Empty Terms

In fact, there are many different issues that arise with empty terms. There are at least three general problems that arise from consideration of empty terms, from the seeming meaningfulness of empty terms, from the seeming truth of statements including empty

---

<sup>54</sup> Quine, W.V.O., ‘Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes’, in *Ways of Paradox* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.184.

<sup>55</sup> This does not depend on the names being purely referential.

terms; and from negative existential claims. But, there are also different kinds of empty terms, which may themselves require different treatments.

### **a. The Problems of Empty Terms**

#### **i. The Seeming Meaningfulness of Empty Terms**

Consider a claim that does not involve an empty term. For, example, the claim ‘Tony Blair is Prime Minister’. This statement is perfectly intelligible. And a very simple story can be told as to why this is so; the term ‘Tony Blair’ contributes to the meaning of the statement by serving to pick out an individual, Tony Blair, and the rest of the sentence asserts of this individual that the property of being Prime Minister is true of him. Call this the naïve theory of proper names. According to the naïve theory the meaning of a proper name is simply the object that it denotes.

But, this naïve theory runs into problems when we consider empty terms. The name ‘Pegasus’ is an empty term. Pegasus does not exist. And yet the term seems to be meaningful; we certainly seem to be able to make meaningful statements that involve it, such as ‘Pegasus is a winged horse’. According to the naïve theory, the meaning of a proper name is simply the object that it denotes. ‘Pegasus’ seems to be a proper name, and yet there does not seem to be any existing object that it denotes. So, we need some account of how this can be so. We have a problem generated by four claims:

- P1 ‘Pegasus’ is meaningful.
- P2 ‘Pegasus’ is a proper name.
- P3 If a proper name is meaningful, then that proper name denotes an object.
- P4 ‘Pegasus’ does not denote an object.

The first, second, and third claims entail that Pegasus denotes an object, and this contradicts the fourth claim. And so, there are four different ways of responding to the first problem. The first option is to deny that empty terms are meaningful. To pursue this option requires that we give some explanation of how it is that empty terms can seem to be meaningful. The second option is to deny that empty terms are proper names. To pursue this option requires that we give some other account of the form of sentences that contain empty terms. The third option is to deny the naïve theory; this requires that we provide some other account of how it is that terms are meaningful that is compatible with the meaningfulness of empty terms. And the fourth and final option is to deny that

empty terms fail to denote objects. The fourth option requires that why it seems to be the case that, e.g., Pegasus does not exist, when in fact the term 'Pegasus' does denote an object.

### **ii. The Seeming Truth of Sentences Containing Empty Terms**

The second problem of empty terms is that of the seeming truth of statements containing empty terms. Consider again the statement 'Tony Blair is Prime Minister'. This statement is not just meaningful, it is true. And again have a very simple story of how it is that the statement is true. It is true because the name 'Tony Blair' picks out an object, Tony Blair, and the property of being Prime Minister is true of this man. According to this story, the truth of the statement depends on the term 'Tony Blair' denoting an object, the man, Tony Blair.

Again, this simple story runs into problems when we consider empty terms. The statement 'Pegasus is a winged horse' not only seems to be meaningful; it seems to be true, at least to anyone with knowledge of Greek mythology. Likewise, the statement 'Pegasus is identical to Pegasus' also appears to be true, and we don't need any knowledge of Greek mythology for that. So again, we have a problem:

- P1     There are true sentences containing the term 'Pegasus'
- P2     'Pegasus' is a proper name.
- P3     If a sentence containing a proper name is true, then that proper name denotes an object.
- P4     'Pegasus' does not denote an object.

The first three claims entail the falsity of the fourth, and hence P1-P4 are inconsistent. Again, there are four ways to respond to this problem, depending on which premise one rejects. And again, rejecting one of these premises requires that we give an account of the seeming plausibility of the premise.

### **iii. Negative Existential Claims**

For the third problem, consider the following sentences:

- S5     Tony Blair exists.
- S6     Vulcan does not exist.

S5 is both true and meaningful. It picks out an individual, Tony Blair, and that individual does exist. However, *prima facie*, the second statement also seems to be both meaningful and true. But how can this be? The statement seems to pick out an object, Vulcan, and assert that that object does not exist. But, the worry goes, if Vulcan does not exist, how is it that it is available to be picked out? On the other hand, if we deny that it is available to be picked out, how can the sentence be both meaningful and true. The worry is articulated as follows; if we make an existence claim, we must be picking out an object to say of that object that it does or does not exist. But, if we can pick out an object, then that object must exist; and so the existence claim must be true. The very possibility of making an existence claim seems to entail the truth of that claim that the object exists, and the falsity of the claim that the object does not exist. But this can't be right; S6 seems to truly assert non-existence.

This problem worry isn't entirely distinct from the first and second. The problem can be generated in two ways; we can either start with the meaningfulness of S6, and proceeding to claim that it must be false, linking meaning to denotation, as per premises P1, P2, and P3 of the first problem. A name denoting an object is then linked to it being true that that object exists, an intuition which was present in the first problem to support premise P4. Or we can argue from the seeming truth of S6 to the claim that either it is false, or is not meaningful. This way of raising the problem requires a link between the truth of a claim containing the term 'Vulcan', and that term denoting an object, as per the second problem. There is still some reason to treat S6 separately: it is much less plausible to deny that S6 is both true and meaningful, then to make a similar response to the first two problems.

### **b. Different Kinds of Empty Terms.**

Again, we can make distinctions between different kinds of empty terms. These distinctions are important with respect to the problems of empty terms; the plausibility of some response to the problems differs when the problems are presented with respect to one or other category of empty terms.

So, there are terms that are in fact empty, although they were not known to be when the terms were introduced. The most notorious examples of such terms come from cases of names for scientifically hypothesised objects, such as 'Vulcan' (for a planet the existence of which was hypothesised to explain perturbations in the orbit of Mercury)

and ‘phlogiston’ (for a substance of negative weight, the existence of which was hypothesised to explain the apparent loss in weight of substances when burnt). The emptiness of these terms seems to be a purely empirical matter, and someone who uses these terms taking them not to be empty seems to be guilty of making an empirical mistake.

Secondly, there are terms that are explicitly introduced to the language as empty terms, such as fictional terms. The term ‘Hamlet’ does not refer to existing man, but furthermore, was not introduced as referring to any existing man. Rather, the term was introduced in a fictional context, as a fictional name. The emptiness of fictional terms does not seem to be an empirical matter. Where someone takes a fictional term to refer (for example, to read *Hamlet* as a historical document, rather than as a play), they would not be guilty of merely empirical mistake. Rather, the taking of a fictional term to be a non-fictional one seems to reflect a deeper semantic confusion; they have failed to properly understand the use to which the term was put<sup>56</sup>.

### **c. The Problem of Intentionality and the Problem of Empty Terms.**

The problem of intentionality I raised in the last section arose because we appear to allow that intentional mental states can be ascribed using empty terms. I argued that if these terms do not pick out objects, the relational view cannot be correct, as there would be no relata for a relation. So, the relevant accounts of empty terms are those that allow empty terms to pick out objects. There are two such views: according to Meinongianism, empty terms pick out non-existent objects. According to a contrasting view, empty terms in fact pick out existent objects. In this section I shall present the two views, arguing that Meinongianism faces some general problems. In the next section, I shall argue that the

---

<sup>56</sup> There is an interesting reflection of the distinction between empirically empty terms, and fictional terms. Suppose that we discover, contrary to the teachings of astrophysics, that there in fact is a planet orbiting closer to the sun than Mercury, and that this planet does explain the perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. This would be a situation in which we discover that a term, ‘Vulcan’, that we thought to be empty is in fact not. In contrast, were we to discover that there was an unfortunate Danish prince upon whom Shakespeare based his play as a historical record, this does not seem to me to be a case in which we discover that a term we have been using, ‘Hamlet’, is in fact not empty. Rather, it seems that we have just discovered that Shakespeare was using a different, although homophonic, name from that we took him to be using.

remaining view faces problems that arise specifically when it is applied to the case of thought about the non-existent.

### **i. Meinongianism**

According to Meinongianism, empty terms such as ‘Hamlet’ and ‘Vulcan’ do not refer to any existing entities. Nevertheless, there are still objects that such terms pick out. These objects are just not existing entities. So, the Meinongian view accepts that there are non-existent objects, and it is these objects that empty terms refer to.

This view is able to provide responses to the three problems of empty terms. Given that empty terms do refer to objects, there is no problem which such terms being meaningful even on the naïve view. According to the naïve view, the meaning of a proper name is the object it denotes. According to Meinongianism, empty terms do denote objects. And hence can be fully meaningful proper names. The Meinongian view is also able to allow for the truth of claims about empty terms. Take the claim ‘Pegasus is a winged horse’. According to the Meinongian view, the term ‘Pegasus’ does pick out an entity, and so the sentence is able to predicate the property of being a winged horse of that entity. So, if the Meinongian allows that non-existent entities can have such properties, the sentence will come out as true despite the non-existence of the denoted object. And thirdly, Meinongianism is able to account for true negative existential claims. The statement ‘Vulcan does not exist’ picks out an object, Vulcan. This object does not exist, just as the statement asserts. And hence, the statement is true.

However, Meinongianism has two consequences: (i) it misconstrues the distinction between existence and non-existence, and (ii) is overly ontologically committed. As I shall show, both these problems arise from Meinong’s mistaken understanding of existence.

According to a Meinongian view, there are objects that do not exist. These objects have being; that is what it means to say that *there are* such objects. But, they do not exist. We can express this by saying that they subsist, but fail to exist. In contrast, there are also objects that exist. These objects also have being, and hence they too subsist. But, as they also exist, they both subsist and exist. So, we can divide up the class of all those objects that subsist into two groups; those that exist, and those that fail to. The distinction between existence and non-existence corresponds to a distinction between two different classes of subsistent objects. And so the question of whether a certain object exists is

equivalent to the question of whether a certain object is a member of the one class, that of existent objects, or the other. The question of whether an object exists is similar to any other question of whether an object is a certain way or not. The question of whether my car is blue is such a question, being equivalent to the question of whether my car is a member of the class of blue things.

But this seems wrong, as can be seen by considering an example of a debate over existence. Consider an argument over whether a particular kind of fundamental particle, the Higgs Boson, really exists. Some physicists are happy to admit of the existence of the Higgs boson as it is a theoretical requirement of standard physical theories; however there is as yet no direct evidence for the existence of such a particle. According to the Meinongian view, an argument over the existence of the Higgs Boson is an argument over whether the Higgs Boson has a certain property or not. On one side is the claim that the Higgs Boson has zero spin and exists; on the other side is the claim that the Higgs Boson lacks this last property. But this seem wrong; the debate presents itself as one over whether there is a Higgs Boson, i.e. a particle of zero spin, at all; there does not appear to be agreement over there being such a particle. The question of whether or not an object exists is not simply a question of whether or not that object is a certain way; it is a more fundamental question, a question of whether or not there is something there at all, capable of being certain ways<sup>57</sup>. But, the issue of whether there is an object at all, in Meinong' terminology, is the issue of whether an object subsists. So it seems that Meinong has confused our notion of existence with his notion of existence, when it would be accurately equated with his notion of subsistence. Given this, he misconstrues the distinction between existence and non-existence as a distinction between two kinds of existing thing.

The second problem is suggested by Russell's comments on Meinongianism:

It is argued, e.g. by Meinong, that we can speak about "the golden mountain," "the round square," and so on; we can make true propositions of which these are the subjects; hence they must have some kind of logical

---

<sup>57</sup> This issue here should not be confused with that of whether 'exists' is a predicate: Meinongianism is quite compatible with a quantifier account of existence. According to Meinongianism, there are two classes of entities. One class exists, the other does not. So, Meinongianism can accept a quantifier account of existence simply by restricting the domain of the existential quantifier to the class of existing objects.

being. ... Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than zoology can ... Similarly, to maintain that Hamlet, for example, exists in his own world, namely, in the world of Shakespeare's imagination, just as truly as (say) Napoleon existed in the ordinary world, is to say something deliberately confusing, or else confused to a degree which is scarcely credible.<sup>58</sup>

Read literally, Russell's attack on Meinongianism is confusing. It appears to involve two claims: (i) that Meinongianism admits of the existence of entities such as unicorns and Hamlet, and (ii) that this commitment is undesirable ("confused to a degree which is scarcely credible"). The second claim is surely correct: it is very implausible to maintain that entities such as unicorns and Hamlet do exist<sup>59</sup>. However, (i) appears false. It is not obviously correct that the Meinongian position commits to the existence of the referents of expressions such as "Hamlet". Rather, it accepts that there are referents of such terms, but that these referents happen to be ones that don't exist. Even more puzzling is that if the first claim is correct, and the Meinongian is committed to the existence of entities such as Hamlet, then the Meinongian is committed to a contradiction, as denying the existence of such entities is definitive of Meinongianism. In which case, a further step to Russell's attack would be unnecessary.

But Russell's attack is not so confused. Russell's talk of the commitment to the existence of entities such as Hamlet is to some degree rhetorical, but what he highlights is that Meinongianism involves undesirable ontological commitments *even if* one grants the possibility of non-existent entities such as Hamlet. According to Meinongianism, we can distinguish between two classes of entities that are the referents of terms, or the relata in intentional relations. There is one class of entities that exist, and a further class of entities that fail to exist. Meinongianism allows that there be entities that fail to exist; entities that have *being*, but not existence. These entities that don't exist share much with those that do; they can take part in relations, be referred to, and presumably quantified over. It is this that Meinongianism is allowing when it admits of entities such

---

<sup>58</sup> Russell., B. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919), p.169-170.

<sup>59</sup> This issue will be taken up in the next section. Strictly speaking, all we can really say is implausible is that 'Hamlet' picks out an existing flesh-and-blood man. As Salmon argues, it is not so implausible to allow that 'Hamlet' picks out an existing abstract object.

as Pegasus, and Hamlet, and it is this that is undesirable. Meinong's account involves undue ontological commitment because his notion of a subsistent entity has all that we think important to existence<sup>60</sup>.

Meinongianism distinguishes between being and existence. The two notions come apart. But what is important about our pre-theoretical notion of existence is captured by the Meinongian notion of being. The Meinongian position misconstrues debates about existence because such debates are about there is an entity that can, e.g., be referred to and thought about. And Meinongianism is guilty of undue ontological commitment because it allows that, e.g., Pegasus has what is important to existence, such as being a possible referent.

## ii. Salmon's Account

Salmon provides the following account of fictional terms. 'Hamlet', when used outside the fiction (e.g., by a literary critic, asking 'Why did Hamlet delay?') refers to a fictional character - an abstract entity. 'Hamlet' when used within the fiction (e.g., by an actor) refers to that very same abstract object. These abstract entities exist, and can be referred to just as Salmon claims that entities such as numbers exist and can be referred to, although they do differ from other abstract objects in that they are artefacts, created by the authors of fictions. According to the fiction, that thing, the abstract entity referred to, is a man by the name of 'Hamlet', and not an abstract object. This is false; men are not abstract objects. And so we get the result that as the play is performed, various false propositions are expressed, but these propositions are held to be true by the fiction. The actors pretend to assert them; pretend that they are committed to expressing true propositions. In fact, they express false propositions<sup>61</sup>.

And Salmon extends this account to cover both mythical terms, such as 'Pegasus', and those whose emptiness is an empirical matter, such as 'Vulcan'. He treats 'Vulcan' as follows: when Babinet attempted to hypothesized and name the planet, he inadvertently created an existing fictional entity. When he introduced the name 'Vulcan', this name, unbeknownst to him, named the fictional entity, just as the Ancients intended to

---

<sup>60</sup> See also Quine's argument in "On What There Is", repr. in his *From a Logical Point of View*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

<sup>61</sup> Salmon, N., 'Nonexistence', *Noûs* 32:3 (1998) pp.227-319.

introduce the term 'Hesperus' as the name for a star, but instead named a planet<sup>62</sup>. So, we have an account that is like the Meinongian in that it allows that the empty term does pick out an object, but differs from the Meinongian account in that the object picked out by the empty term exists<sup>63</sup>. In this respect, The account has something in common with the claim that when we use empty terms we are talking about ideas; such as the idea of Hamlet, or the idea of Vulcan. Such a claim also allows that empty names refer to existing entities radically different from those one might mistakenly take them to.

Salmon's account, with abstract objects, is able to account for the three problems of empty terms. The first problem arose from a combination of the naïve theory of meaning, and the claim that empty terms do not have referents. According to Salmon, empty terms do refer, and so sentences containing them are meaningful (and can express propositions). It also allows for claims such as 'Pegasus is a flying horse' to be truth-valued. They can be true or false depending on whether what is predicated of the abstract object is true of it or not. Salmon in fact claims that many such sentences are false, as abstract objects are not flying horses (likewise for 'Hamlet is prince of Denmark'; he is not – no abstract objects are members of the Danish royal family). However, the claims that Hamlet is an abstract object, and that Hamlet was created by Shakespeare, are true (the latter because such abstract objects are artefacts created by the authors of fictions). With respect to the third issue of negative existential claims, Salmon's account is less plausible. The statement 'Hamlet does not exist' is, according to Salmon's account, false. The abstract fictional character does exist. Salmon does allow that there is a sense in which the statement is true; both the statements 'Hamlet is not real', where being real would entail that Hamlet is flesh-and-blood, and 'There is nothing that has the distinguishing attributes ascribed to Hamlet in the play' are true. These claims express true propositions, and so a subject might use the claim 'Hamlet

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>63</sup> It is worth noting that Salmon does not apply his abstract entity account to *all* cases of empty terms. So, for example Salmon allows that some empty terms refer to merely possible entities; he accepts that there are possible, but non-actual, entities that are the referents of expressions (he introduces the term 'Noman' as a name for one, Ibid, p.286). Salmon's aim is to preserve a Millian account of names; one according to which all there is to the meaning of a name is its referent, but allow for the meaningfulness of statements involving empty terms. But, his strategy is to divide and conquer; offering different accounts for different categories of empty terms. In order to give a general discussion of the features of Salmon's account, I shall ignore these complications here.

does not exist' to *convey* something that is true, strictly speaking, they have spoken falsely. In effect, Salmon bites the bullet with respect of negative existential claims.

Salmon's account does capture the phenomena well when applied to fictional terms. When distinguishing between fictional terms, and empirically empty terms, I appealed to the fact that the taking of a fictional term to be a name for an actual individual seems to demonstrate a failure to properly understand the use to which the fictional term is being put. Salmon's account of fictional terms provides a neat account of the nature of this misunderstanding. Fictional names such as 'Hamlet' pick out fictional characters; abstract objects, which *according to fictions* are names for real flesh-and-blood individuals. Someone who reads Hamlet as a historical document, and takes the name to refer to a flesh-and-blood individual, is, as it were, *taking the fiction too seriously*. They mistakenly take the fictional term to refer to an object of the kind it does according to the fiction. In doing so, such an individual has incorrectly taken the fictional term to pick out an object different in kind, and distinct from, that it actually picks out. They hence fail to grasp which object the term is being used to refer to. And this grounds the claim that they have misunderstood the term, particularly on Salmon's Millian account of meaning.

Salmon's commitment to the falsity of negative existential claims regarding fictional characters is a little counter-intuitive, but this does not in itself provide a fatal objection to the account. Unless we have a general reason to be suspicious of abstract objects in general, there is no reason to suppose that we cannot pick out abstract objects, such as numbers, with some of our terms. But given this, we would need to suppose that there was a special reason for thinking this could not be the case with respect of fictional terms, which I don't have. Besides, there does seem something right, at least for fictional terms, with the claim that although Hamlet does not exist as a man, he does exist as a fictional character.

However, the account does lose some plausibility when applied to all empty terms. In doing so, it blurs the distinction I made earlier between fictional terms and whose emptiness is an empirical matter. So, for example, Le Verrier attempted to use the term 'Vulcan', introduced by Babinet as the purported name for a hypothesised planet, to refer to this planet in order to explain perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. This does not seem to be a case in which someone misunderstands a term. Rather, it seems to be a case in which Le Verrier tried to make a reference to something, but been thwarted in the attempt by the way the world in fact is. Le Verrier could, in his use of the term, be

explicitly aware of the description by which Babinet introduced the name into the language. The abstract object does not meet that descriptive condition. And nor did Babinet pretend to claim that it does. Given this, it is less plausible that Le Verrier is referring to a fictional entity created by Babinet.

And Salmon's treatment of negative existential statements has some odd consequences if we apply his account to all empty terms - it would be impossible to assert the non-existence of something using an empty term. Its account of fictional non-existence statements is acceptable, because we have the intuition that there is a sense in which we can truly say 'Hamlet exists, although as a fictional character and not a man'. However, there is no corresponding intuition for terms such as 'Vulcan'. It just doesn't seem correct to say that 'Vulcan actually exists, although not as a planet'. But according to Salmon, it is. Salmon's account, if generalised to all empty terms, cannot give a response to the third problem of empty terms that is compatible with the intuition that such negative existential claims are possible.

#### **d. Back to the Problem of Psychological Ascriptions**

Despite its having some counter-intuitive consequences, Salmon's does not run into any deep problems, and so we can try to apply it to the problem of intentionality. For the account to support a relational view, it must allow that our attributions of intentional mental states really do pick out relational states of affairs even when they are completed with empty terms. To do this, they must allow not just that the empty terms that complete the statement such as '*a* worships ...' succeed in picking out objects, but furthermore, that the statements are true. If the statements are not true, then they would give us no reason to suppose that intentionality is relational. And it is the difficulty of giving an adequate account of how this can be that causes problems for such views.

To see the nature of the problem, consider first why Salmon himself denies the truth of such statements as 'Pegasus is a winged horse'. In effect, Salmon responds to the second problem of empty terms by denying the intuition that such statements are true. He explains the seeming truth of such statements in terms of their being held to be true according to fictions. This response is reasonable for the following reason. According to Salmon's account, Pegasus is not flesh-and-blood, but an abstract object. The statement predicates that being a winged horse is true of an abstract object. But abstract objects are not the sort of things that can be winged horses. And so the statement must be false. The object the empty term picks out is not as the statement asserts it to be. This response is

even more plausible when we consider the statement ‘Pegasus is white’. This statement predicates a colour property of an abstract object. But, abstract objects are not the sort of thing that can be coloured. And so, according to Salmon’s account, at best the statement must be false. The problem here is that if we take the seemingly true statements involving fictional empty terms to be predicating of abstract objects just what they predicate of flesh-and-blood individuals, the statements cannot actually be true.

Of course, if we still want to allow for the truth of the sentence, there is way in which we can do so. We can reconcile the truth of the sentence ‘Pegasus is white’, with the theoretical commitment that Pegasus is an abstract object, and the fact abstract objects cannot be coloured, by postulating an ambiguity. According to such a move, the predicate ‘is white’, when applied to the abstract object Pegasus predicates of it not a spatial property, but some other property that abstract objects can have. So Salmon’s account can either deny the truth of the seemingly true claims, or postulate an ambiguity. And given this, it is not surprising that Salmon chooses the former option.

Exactly the same dilemma occurs when we consider psychological state ascriptions. Consider statements of the form ‘Keiko wants ...’. If we complete this statement with a non-empty term, the result is unproblematic. But if we complete the statement with an empty term, one that on Salmon’s account picks out an abstract object, the result is an ascription which cannot be held to be true in exactly the same sense. Compare:

- S7      Keiko wants David Beckam.
- S8      Keiko wants Darcy.

The first want picks out a flesh-and-blood person, and we have a clear idea of how it is that Keiko could want a flesh-and-blood person. Particularly, we have a clear idea of what it would be for the want to be satisfied, and given that we have a clear idea of the satisfaction conditions of S7, there is no problem supposing the truth of S7. In contrast, according to Salmon’s account the fictional name ‘Darcy’ refers to an abstract object. But, abstract objects are just not the kind of thing that one can want, or at least, not the kind of thing that one can want in the sense in which one wants David Beckam. What would it be for the want to be satisfied in the latter case? Again, we can resolve this difficulty in two ways. We can either reject the truth of S8, and explain it’s seeming truth in some other terms (perhaps in terms of Keiko’s imaginative engagement with the work of Jane Austin). Or we could postulating an ambiguity; ‘wants’ means something different in S7 and S8.

But if we are trying to use psychological state ascriptions to support a relational view of intentionality, we do not have the luxury of the former option. It is not plausible to deny the truth of statements such as S8. The point of appealing to Salmon's account of fictional terms is to find a way such that claims like S8 can pick out two objects and be true, despite the emptiness of the term 'Darcy'. And so, to support the relational view, we must postulate an ambiguity. But this is implausible in the psychological case; for Keiko, the wants seem to be of the same kind.

The overall moral of this discussion is not that one should not desire fictional characters. Rather, the thought is that although Salmon's account does not run into any obvious formal problems, it doesn't accurately capture our pre-theoretical intuitions about the nature of the phenomena it purports to describe. The account does not run into formal problems because it can allow for the meaningfulness and truth of the psychological statements which are both meaningful and true. But it doesn't accurately capture the phenomena because to account for the truth of these claims, the account is forced to postulate ambiguities where we would not expect any.

This problem is not simply an artefact of Salmon's specific working out of his account. It applies to all non-Meinongian accounts that allow empty terms to pick out entities. The broader structure of the problem is this; it is highly implausible that Darcy is an existing man. And so any account according to which the term Darcy picks out an existing object must identify some other kind of object that the term picks out. To support the relational account of intentionality, such an account must allow for the truth of psychological claims that have Darcy as their intentional object. But in allowing for their truth, such accounts misconstrue the nature of the psychological states they are attempting to describe; if someone wants Darcy, they have a desire directed at a man; not at some entirely different kind of object.

#### **e. Conclusion**

Neither Meinongianism or Salmon's account provide plausible way to construe ascriptions of psychological states containing empty terms as ascribing relational states. Meinongianism encounters general problems with its construal of existence; Salmon's account does not capture the phenomenon it purports to describe. Hence, if intentional psychological states can be truly ascribed using empty terms, such instances of intentionality cannot be construed as relational.



some of these characterisations is grounded in the occurrence of psychological, or intentional relations. However, weak relationalism is compatible with there being correct characterisations in the absence of psychological, or intentional, relations. Weak relationalism allows that there are two different kinds of intentional mental state; relational and non-relational intentional states. The relational intentional states are constituted by the occurrence of psychological, or intentional, relations between subjects and objects. The non-relational intentional mental states are not constituted by the occurrence of psychological, or intentional, relations. According to strong relationalism, all intentionality is the same; it is all relational. According to weak relationalism, some intentionality is relational, but some isn't.

Following from the characterisation of strong relationalism, we might characterise weak relationalism as follows:

Weak relationalism                     $\exists \psi 'a \psi o'$  is true only if  
     $\exists R a R s \text{ to } o \wedge$   
     $R$  is a psychological or intentional relation

### iii. Non-Relationalism

Finally, we are left with the position that denies that intentionality is ever relational; that no intentional mental states are constituted by the occurrence of intentional, or psychological relations. Non-relationalism can therefore be represented as follows:

Non-relationalism                     $\neg \exists \psi 'a \psi o'$  is true only if  
     $\exists R a R s \text{ to } o \wedge$   
     $R$  is a psychological or intentional relation

According to non-relationalism, non of our characterisations of intentional psychological states depends on the occurrence of psychological, or intentional relations.

## b. Evaluation of the Positions

### i. Strong Relationalism

The strong relationalist account of intentionality is implausible. The strong relationalist claims that intentionality is in all cases relational. That is, statements of the form ' $a \psi o$ ' are always used to ascribe relational psychological states; states constituted by the occurrence of a psychological or intentional relations between  $a$  and  $o$ . So, if the sentence ' $a$  has a belief about  $o$ ' is true, then there occurs a psychological relation,  $R$ , between  $a$  and  $b$ . If ' $a$  desires  $o$ ' is true,  $a$  stands desiring relation to a particular  $o$ , and likewise for all the other psychological verbs.

As I have argued in §2, if any of our mental state ascriptions can be used to ascribe psychological states in the non-specific reading, they cannot be seen to be ascribing relational states. And as I have argued in §3, if any of our mental state ascriptions can be correctly used to ascribe psychological states using whilst containing empty terms, those ascriptions cannot plausibly be taken to ascribe relational states. And hence, strong relationalism is committed to denying both that one can correctly ascribe psychological states using non-specific psychological attitude ascriptions, or ascriptions containing empty terms.

But neither of these claims is plausible. We often do use general ascriptions such as 'Mary wants a cup of tea'. And we use ascriptions containing empty terms, such as 'Mary is thinking about Pegasus'. The strong relationalist account must deny that these sentences do succeed in ascribing intentional mental states, and hence has highly revisionary consequences for our pre-theoretical practices.

The strong relationalist can maintain that we do use our psychological verbs as if they are intensional, and that they can only correctly be used extensionally, by denying that we use our own psychological verbs correctly. So, in our pre-theoretical psychological talk, we take it that we can characterise Keiko's psychological state by asserting 'Keiko wants Darcy', even though we know that 'Darcy' does not refer. The strong relationalist must deny that we can truly assert this, and hence must claim that much of our pre-theoretical use of psychological verbs is incorrect.

## ii. Weak Relationalism

According to weak relationalism, some of our intentional state ascriptions are made true by the occurrence of relations, and some are not. Hence, according to weak relationalism there are two different kinds of intentional mental state – relational intentional states, and non-relational intentional states. Some instances in which we characterise

intentional states using our psychological verbs are made true by relational states, and some are not. At this point, one might worry that weak relationalism is implausible. The weak relationalist accepts that some sentences containing psychological verbs of the form ' $a \psi o$ ' are true in virtue of relational facts, and some aren't. But given this, the weak relationalist must accept, for example, that existential generalisation will not hold of all sentences of the form ' $a \psi o$ '. And if existential generalisation does not hold, the sentences cannot be said to have a relational form. So what reason is there to hold weak relationalism, as opposed to non-relationalism?

We can bring out this worry by considering McDowell's position in "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name"<sup>64</sup>. This provides an example of a weak relational view. In this paper, McDowell argues for two points that relevant to the current discussion. Firstly, McDowell argues for a certain view of the content of sincere assertive utterances, arguing that sincere assertive utterances which contain proper names fail to express a content if the proper name fails to refer. And secondly, McDowell links this account of the content of sincere assertive utterances to an account of the contents of mental states, entailing that there are thoughts, the having of which entails the occurrence of a relation between the subject and an object.

McDowell accepts this because he claims (i) that the content of sincere assertive utterances to be fixed by axioms which specify the content of its constitutive expressions, and (ii) that the axioms that fix the contents of proper names simply state their referents, such as:

1. 'Hesperus' stands for (denotes) Hesperus

McDowell claims that we cannot accept axioms of the form of (1) for expressions that function syntactically as names, but for which we have reason to believe exist no bearer. Names which fail to refer have no content. But, the contents of sincere assertive utterances that contain names which fail to refer is fixed by the contents of their constituent expressions, and so we cannot fix a content for sincere assertive utterances that contain such names. And so, according to McDowell, utterances that contain names which fail to refer do not in fact express contents. McDowell accepts that empty terms

---

<sup>64</sup> McDowell, J., "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name", *Mind*, 86 (1977), pp.159-185.

do not refer. And so, on McDowell's account, a sincere utterance of (2) would fail to express a content:

2 Vulcan is the planet closest to the sun.

McDowell links his account of the conditions under which a sincere assertive utterance is able to have content to an account of the conditions under which certain beliefs are possible. Just as sentences containing proper names can only have content when those proper names refer, so too is it only possible to have a thought expressible using a proper name when that proper name refers. According to McDowell, any thought expressible by a sentence containing a proper name must be correctly describable in the transparent, or relational, style, i.e. as a thought "concerning the bearer, that it satisfies some specified condition". Thoughts expressible by sentences containing names that fail to refer can not be correctly describable in this way, hence there are no such thoughts. McDowell's claim is that the very thought that is expressible using a proper name is not a thought that can be had if that proper name fails to have a referent. So, for McDowell, there is a certain class of thoughts; thoughts expressible by sincere assertive utterances involving proper names, the having of which requires that there be a particular thought about object.

So, McDowell accepts that there are some relational psychological states correctly ascribable using psychological verbs such as 'believes'. Beliefs expressible using proper names are such states; the sentence 'Mary is thinking about Vulcan' ascribes such a belief, and hence is true only if there is an object, and Mary stands in a psychological relation to that object ('having the thought, concerning Vulcan, that it ...'). But McDowell doesn't commit to the claim that all belief ascriptions work like this. There are belief ascriptions that do not involve proper names. McDowell is not committed to relationalism about such beliefs. He therefore need not say that a belief expressible using the definite description 'the golden mountain' must be describable in the transparent style. And so beliefs expressible using definite description need not be constituted by the occurrence of psychological relations. So, McDowell leaves it open that there are occasions on which we can ascribe mental states to subjects using sentence of the form '*a ψ o*', which are not made true by the occurrence of psychological relations. And, McDowell allows that the *same* psychological verb can be used on these occasions.

According to McDowell's position, there are radical distinctions between different types of intentional phenomena which are not mirrored in our psychological vocabulary. Some

claims of the form '*a* has a belief about *o*' are true only if relational psychological states obtain, when '*o*' is a proper name, and some are not true only if relational psychological states obtain, e.g. when '*o*' is a definite description. But this means that sentences of the form '*a* has a belief about *o*' do not support existential generalisation, and so are not of a relational form. But then we cannot appeal to the form of the statements to support a relational account. Furthermore, there are radical differences between types of psychological states that we ascribe as directed towards objects using the same psychological verbs, which are just not reflected in our psychological vocabulary. And this should give us pause for thought – McDowell's account suggests that our pre-theoretical understanding of our mental states, as embodied in the language we use to describe and ascribe them, is radically incomplete. And this that is objectionable.

But it would be incorrect to suppose that this objection applies to any weak relational account. We have many different psychological verbs. Whilst sentences of the form '*a*  $\psi$  *o*', when ' $\psi$ ' is, e.g. 'worships', or 'wants' do not plausibly pick out relational states, it is still open to the weak relationalist to claim that there are some psychological verbs for which it is plausible to suppose pick out relational psychological states. For example, subjects treat sentences of the form '*a*  $\psi$  *o*' when ' $\psi$ ' is, e.g. 'discovers', 'recognises', or 'perceives', as supporting existential generalisation, and hence as having a relational form. And so it is possible for the weak relationalist to claim that the psychological states ascribed by these psychological verbs are relational. This claim is supported by considerations of the pre-theoretical ways in which we use psychological verbs, and does not entail that there are fundamental distinctions between kinds of mental state are not reflected in our psychological vocabulary.

This is not a conclusive argument for weak relationalism. As we shall see in the next section, a non-relational account can also allow that for some verbs, sentences of the form '*a*  $\psi$  *o*' have a relational form. But this does show that weak relationalism is not rendered implausible simply because it allows that some statements containing psychological verbs are true in virtue of non-relational states. The weak relationalist can still appeal to considerations regarding the apparently relational form of sentences containing some psychological verbs. And as I shall argue in the next section, there is reason to suppose that the relational form of these sentences presents a problem for a non-relationalist account.

### iii. Non-Relational Intentionality

The non-relationalist claims that in no cases is intentionality relational. The obtaining of no intentional psychological state entails that there is a particular object that the state is directed upon. Given that they can obtain in the absence of an object, no intentional psychological states are constituted by relational facts. And this allows the non-relationalist to allow for the use of psychological verbs such as 'believes', 'wants', etc.... We pre-philosophically ascribe psychological states by means of sentences containing these psychological verbs and empty terms. If psychological verbs do pick out psychological states, and the obtaining of those psychological states does not depend on there being a particular object that is the one that the state is directed towards, then we should be able to use our psychological verbs to correctly pick out those states when there is no particular object that is picked out by the term completing our statement.

But, as already noted, there are some psychological verbs that aren't used in these ways. Verbs like 'perceive', 'see', and 'know' are used extensionally. We are not prepared to assert the sentence 'Keiko sees David Beckham' in circumstances under which we would not be prepared to assert 'there is some  $x$  such that Keiko sees  $x$ '. These verbs are used to ascribe psychological states. But they are not used if there is no particular object that the state is directed upon. It seems to be untenable to reject that the states ascribed by such verbs are intentional, or that such ascriptions can only be true in the presence of a particular object. So, we have a problem for non-relationalism.

Dennett provides us with an example of how one can maintain non-relationalism in light of the extensionality of some psychological verbs<sup>65</sup>. According to Dennett, no intentional mental states are relational<sup>66</sup>. As Dennett recognises, anyone who adopts a

---

<sup>65</sup> Dennett, D., *Content and Consciousness*, (London & Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

<sup>66</sup> Dennett presents himself as adopting a 'deliberate ontological blindness' in his discussion of intentionality. He claims to suppose that there are no phenomena such as thoughts, beliefs and desires. Given his ontological blindness, Dennett initially seems to treat intentionality as a feature of sentences, rather than a feature of mental states themselves. In contrast, I treat intentionality as a feature of mental states ascribed by such sentences. But this difference doesn't run very deep, because Dennett wants to accept that there are psychological states that we characterise using our intentional vocabulary. He claims that all psychological states we characterise using mental

non-relational account of intentionality will have a problem with those psychological verbs that support existential generalisation. In response to this problem, Dennett claims that such extensional psychological verbs are ‘clearly mongrel terms, part mental and psychological component, part contextual or epistemic’<sup>67</sup>, and claims that ‘treating the mongrel terms as referring neat to psychological states’ is absurd. The thought here is clearly a thought about the psychological states that underlie our use of psychological verbs; a thought about the truth-makers of our mental language. The different components of these mongrel terms can be distinguished by their picking out different states. The psychological component picks out a mental state *that could* obtain in the absence of the particular object; the commitment to there being a particular object is introduced by the other component. This is most readily apparent in his discussion of ‘sees’: ‘John sees the dog’ speaks not only of John’s state of mind, but also of his position in the physical environment’<sup>68</sup>. The underlying thought is this: amongst the truth-makers of the statements involving extensional psychological verbs are *non-relational psychological* facts which do not involve particular objects, and some *other relational non-psychological* facts which do. The verbs do have a relational form, but this is not because they ascribe relational psychological states.

So, in general, non-relationalism is not falsified by the fact that there are psychological verbs that have a relational form. The non-relationalist can accept that such verbs do characterise intentional psychological states, can only be correctly used to in the presence of an existing object, and even that there are relational facts amongst the truth-makers of such verbs (such as John’s position in the physical environment), and yet deny that these the *psychological* state is relational - the relations that on which the truth of the claim depends are non-psychological. But on the other hand, the non-relationalist must deny that many of our psychological verbs actually pick out psychological states.

### c. Conclusion

We can appeal to broad considerations of logical form in an attempt to adjudicate between the different views of intentionality. These considerations of logical form are

---

language are non-relational; the obtaining of one of those state does not entail that there is a particular object that the state is directed towards. Hence, Dennett accepts that, as I use the term, intentionality is non-relational.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.24.

not decisive; they are based on the ways in which we pre-theoretically use psychological verbs, and it is always open for one to deny that our pre-theoretical use of our psychological verbs is a good guide to their logical form, or to deny that the psychological verbs actually pick out 'neat' psychological states. The issue is rather one of what costs are imposed by making such moves. I have argued that the costs imposed on a Strong Relationalist account are too high – the strong relationalist must deny that many of the ways in which we pre-theoretically use our psychological verbs are incorrect. However, this result does not entail the claim that we should treat intentionality as non-relational. The weak relationalist position denies this, and is not ruled out by such broad considerations.

## Chapter Three: Concluding Remarks

The intentionalist claims that mind-independent physical objects and properties are non-relationally presented subjects in perceptual experience. Perceiving subjects are in mental states that represent elements of the mind-independent physical environment to the subject, their doing so is not constituted by relations between the subject and elements of her physical environment. We are now in a position to discuss whether the intentionalist can legitimately appeal to the intentionality of experience to support this view.

The appeal to intentionality can be split into two stages. Firstly, the intentionalist claimed that perceptual experience is just another intentional state. And secondly, the intentionalist claimed that its being an intentional state supported the non-relational account of the presentation of objects and properties in experience. I shall now deal with these issues in turn.

### §1. Intentionality and Perceptual Experience

Intentional mental states are mental states that are directed towards objects. As argued in the previous chapter, it is difficult to expand on this characterisation of intentionality, but an uncontroversial way to do so is to switch our discussion to considering characterisations and attributions of intentional mental states. Intentional mental states are states that are directed at objects; they can be ascribed by locutions of the form 'X is thinking about ...', and 'X worships ...', where the ascription is completed by an expression that gives the intentional object, the same expression which is used to answer questions such as 'What is X thinking about?', and 'What does X worship?'. More generally, they can be ascribed by expression of the form '*a*  $\psi$  *o*', where '*a*' is the name for a subject, ' $\psi$ ' a psychological verb, and '*o*' the expression that gives the intentional object.

Perceptual states certainly meet this criteria for being intentional. Perceptual states can be said to be directed at objects. At the moment, I see the laptop computer on the table before me. I can describe this state as one that is directed at a laptop computer; if someone were to ask 'What do you see?', the correct answer would be given by the expression 'a laptop computer'. My current perceptual state can be ascribed using a locution of the form '*a*  $\psi$  *o*', by claiming 'I  $\psi$  a laptop computer'. In this, the expression

that gives the intentional object also specifies the physical elements that are presented to the subject of the perceptual state. Therefore there is good reason to regard the presentation of objects in perceptual experience as a form of intentional directedness.

#### **a. Is the Intentionality of Perceptual Experience Non-Relational?**

The first point to note is that the general phenomena of intentionality does not support a non-relational account of perceptual experience. If we had strong grounds for thinking that all instances of intentionality should be construed non-relationally, i.e. that non-relationalism provides the correct about intentionality, the mere fact that perceptual experience is intentional would be sufficient to establish that we should treat the presentation of physical elements in perception non-relationally. But, in there are several positions one can take with respect to the relationality of intentionality. Of these positions, only the strong relational account is completely implausible. Non-relationalism does not follow from this, because one can hold a weak relationalist account, and maintain that some instances of intentionality are relational.

So the mere fact that perceptual experience is intentional cannot provide grounds for supposing that the presentation of objects in perceptual experience is to be construed non-relationally. This does not mean that all is lost – we might still be able to use the broad considerations that bearing on the general issue of whether intentionality is relationally to argue that the *specific* instances of intentionality involved in perceptual experience are non-relational.

Why is this possible? The broad considerations did not support the claim that all instances of intentionality are relational, because it is open to maintain that some kinds of intentionality are relational. In light of the fact that some of the verbs that ascribe intentional mental states do have a relational form, one can plausibly maintain that there are kinds of intentional state that are relational (or, at least, maintaining this does not entail that one reject the correctness of our pre-theoretical use of our psychological vocabulary). So, the question to raise now is whether the specific instances of intentionality involved in perception are relational or not. And, sticking with these broad considerations of logical form, we can ask, do the verbs that ascribe intentional perceptual states have a relational form.

I'll restrict my discussion to those perceptual locutions of the form '*a ψ o*'. There are perceptual locutions of the propositional attitude form, e.g. 'I see that it is raining

outside'. As I have already discussed, we can distinguish between issues concerning such propositional attitudes, and the more specific problem of intentionality.

The intentionalist claims that the mental states of genuinely perceiving and hallucinating subjects are both intentional states of the same sort, states that are non-relationally intentionally directed at the objects that they present to the subject. There are three perceptual verbs that admit of the form '*a ψ o*', which are relevant to the ascription and characterisation of perceptual states; 'sees', 'experiences', and 'hallucinates'. So, we can start the discussion by examining whether there are reasons for thinking that these locutions do, or do not have, a relational form, and hence whether they do, or do not, pick out relational facts. In itself, this issue does not decisively settle the issue of whether the psychological states ascribed are relational<sup>69</sup>. What is important is rather what costs are imposed on accounts that deny that our psychological verbs pick out 'neat' psychological states.

The perceptual verb 'sees' does have a relational form. It does not have any of the features distinctive of non-relational psychological verbs. That is, statements using the perceptual verb 'sees' do support existential generalisation, do allow substitution of co-referential terms, and do not exhibit an ineliminable degree of generality. For example, from the statement 'S sees Tony Blair' one can legitimately infer 'there is some *x*, such that S sees *x*'. Likewise, from 'S sees Superman', and 'Superman is Clark Kent', one can infer 'S sees Clark Kent'. Furthermore, 'sees' statements do not have an ineliminable degree of generality; there is no unspecific reading of 'S sees a tree' (we cannot read it as claiming 'S sees a tree, but no particular one'). These considerations apply to all the other so-called 'success' perceptual verbs, such as 'perceives', 'watches', 'notes', 'surveys', 'regards', 'attends to' etc....

In contrast, existential generalisation does not hold of 'hallucinates' statements: one cannot infer 'there is some *x*, such that S has a hallucination of *x*' from 'S has a hallucination of Tony Blair'. The issue of generality is not so clear. The unspecific formulation of the hallucination statement 'S has a hallucination of a tree' - 'S has a

---

<sup>69</sup> As my discussion of Dennett demonstrated, a psychological verb having a relational form does not entail that the *psychological* states ascribed and characterised are relational. And as my discussion of McDowell highlighted, the converse is also true – one can claim that a psychological verb has a non-relational form, and still in some cases ascribes a relational state.

hallucination of a tree, but no particular one' – does not seem to accurately characterise the state ascribed by the original statement. But on the other hand, the usual way of clearly stating a specific reading, 'there is some particular tree that S sees', cannot be correct because of the failure of existential generalisation. If one thinks that there being a specific reading depends on the possibility of such a formulation, one might claim that hallucination statements exhibit a degree of ineliminable generality. The issue here is not settled. Substitution of co-referential terms is allowed in hallucination statements. From 'S has a hallucination of Superman', and 'Superman is Clark Kent, it follows that 'S has a hallucination of Clark Kent'.

Finally, we can turn to 'experience'. As with hallucination statements, experience statements do not support existential generalisation. From 'S experiences Tony Blair', one cannot infer 'there is some  $x$  such that S experiences  $x$ '. The issue of generality is similar to that for hallucination. The statement 'S experiences a tree, but no particular one' again sounds dubious as a reading of 'S experiences a tree', but again the claim that 'there is some particular tree that S sees' cannot be an accurate rendition of how we should instead read the statement. Finally, substitution of co-referential terms is allowable in experience statements.

This suggests that 'sees' ascribes out relational states, and that 'experiences', and 'hallucinates' do not. But we should not yet assume that there are relational psychological states, seeings, and non-relational psychological states, experiences and hallucinations. This is because seeing statements entail experience statements. From 'S sees  $o$ ', one can infer 'S experiences  $o$ '. The first claim has a relational form, and is true only if there obtain certain relations between the subject of the state and  $o$ , whilst the latter claim does not have a relational form. It can be true even if such relations do not occur. These two statements have different truth-conditions, and so cannot both pick out the *same* 'neat' psychological state. Unless there are two distinct psychological states present in a case when 'S sees  $o$ ', which is implausible, both statements cannot pick out 'neat' psychological states.

The intentionalist position is that the psychological state ascribed by both statements is not relational, and could occur in the absence of a relation to  $o$ . The intentionalist is therefore able to claim that 'S experiences  $o$ ' picks out the 'neat' psychological state; in contrast the statement 'S sees  $o$ ' does not pick out such a 'neat' state. In Dennett's terminology it is a 'mongrel' verb, that has a psychological component (that ascribes the state better picked out by 'S experiences  $o$ '), and a non-psychological component that

introduces the commitment to the occurrence of relations between S and *o*. And the intentionalist must claim that the other so-called success verbs ‘perceives’, ‘watches’, ‘notes’, ‘surveys’, ‘regards’, ‘attends to’ pick are mongrel verbs.

The contrasting weak relationalist response would be to allow that ‘S sees *o*’ (and all the other ‘success’ perceptual verbs) pick out ‘neat’ psychological states. As ‘S sees *o*’ has a relational form, these psychological states would be relational states. This leaves ‘S experiences *o*’ as not picking out a neat state. The claim ‘S experiences *o*’, although used to ascribe a relational mental state in this case, must be such that it can also be used to ascribe other mental states that are not constituted by relations to *o*. Hence, the ‘experience’ verb is disjunctive – experience claims can be true in virtue of the obtaining of different types of perceptual state. The weak relationalist is disjunctive account of perception.

So this leaves us with both the intentionalist and the naïve realist/disjunctivist denying that one of our perceptual verbs picks out a psychological state. If the appeal to the intentionality of perception is to support an intentionalist account of perception, there must be reason to suppose that it is ‘experience’ that picks out the ‘neat’ psychological state.

There are a couple of considerations to raise here. Firstly, the fact that ‘experience’ is the more general verb, characterising the mental states of both hallucinating and seeing subjects, gives no reason to suppose it picks out the same mental features in both cases. Consider an analogous cognitive example. We can use the expression ‘has a thought about’ as a general term for describing many cognitive mental states. We could re-describe the states we ascribe using the statements ‘Mary has a belief about Tony Blair’, and ‘Mary desires Tony Blair’ using the statement ‘Mary has a thought about Tony Blair’. The expression seems to serve as a general ‘catch-all’ expression for pretty much any cognitive state that is intentionally directed. And this statement does not have a relational form; it does not admit of existential generalisation, or substitution of co-referential terms, and statements in which the intentional object is specified using general terms admit of both specific and non-specific readings. But it would be absurd to base an argument for the non-relationality of *all* the cognitive states that can be described as cases of ‘having a thought about’ on the non-relational form of this expression. To do so would be to assume that the expression is picking out a single kind of intentional state in all cases, and this seems unlikely given that the expression encompasses many different kinds of cognitive state. The intentionalist must give us

reason to think that 'experience' is not a similar catch-all perceptual verb if appeal to the intentionality of perception is to support a non-relational account.

But secondly, the intentionalist is committed not just to denying that 'sees' and the other success verbs pick out neat psychological states, but also that 'hallucinates' fails to pick out a neat psychological state. The claim that 'S has a hallucination *o*' has a further entailment. From the claim that 'S has a hallucination of *o*', one can infer 'it is not the case that S sees *o*'. I have already argued that it is plausible that 'sees' picks out relational states, and that 'hallucinates' doesn't. But this doesn't quite capture everything about hallucination. 'hallucinates' doesn't just fail to be sensitive to the obtaining of the relational states that 'sees' is. It is sensitive to them, *but in the opposite way*. It is only correct to use the verb 'hallucinates' if we do not have a case that can be described by 'sees'. In contrast, an 'experiences' statement doesn't entail the falsity of a 'sees' statement in fact, 'sees' statements entail 'experiences' statements. So the truth-conditions of 'hallucinates' statements differ from those of 'experiences' statements. But 'hallucination' statements entail 'experience' statements to. One can infer from 'S has a hallucination of *o*' that 'S experiences *o*'. Given the difference in their truth conditions, both cannot be ascribing the same 'neat' psychological state. Hence, assuming that in such a case we do not have two different psychological states present, the intentionalist must deny too that 'hallucinates' picks out a neat mental state.

So, the picture we are left with on the non-relationalist intentionalist account is one on which we have a variety of perceptual verbs, most of which are sensitive to certain relational facts. The so-called success verbs, such as 'sees', but also 'perceives', and other verbs such as 'watches', 'notes', 'surveys' etc..., are all true only if relational mental states occur. In contrast 'hallucination' is sensitive to the same relational states, being true only if the relational mental states picked out by the success verbs don't obtain. But according to non-relationalist, these relation facts to which they are sensitive are not psychological facts. Most of our perceptual vocabulary fails to pick out neat psychological states. In contrast, the weak relationalist can allow that most of our perceptual vocabulary does pick out neat psychological states. She must only deny that 'experiences' does; according to the weak relationalist, 'experiences is a catch-all verb, much like 'thinks about'. It seems that more costs are imposed on the non-relationalist than on the weak relationalist.

There is obviously more here that the intentionalist could say to support his account. For example, it might be claimed that these relational facts are hugely important in our

dealings with the world, and hence it is not surprising that some of our psychological vocabulary is important to them. But this is besides the point. The original idea behind appealing to the intentionality of perceptual experience was that it supported the non-relational account. But, the general considerations that we can use to decide if any particular intentional state should be given a relational treatment suggest that the burden of proof is in fact on the non-relational account.

### **b. Can the Intentionalist Appeal to Other Features of Experience?**

At this point one might think that I have been overly restrictive in the possible arguments I have considered. Surely the intentionalist does not need to argue solely from these linguistic considerations. Why can the intentionalist not appeal to other features of experience to support the claim that the same psychological state is present in both cases of veridical perception and hallucination, and hence that the intentionality of this psychological state must be construed relationally?

The problem with this move is that if we start appealing specific features of the perceptual case, we are no longer using general considerations about intentionality to support intentionalism as an account of perception. The original point of introducing the claim that experience is intentional was to link to other directed states such as beliefs, and desires. The hope was that in linking experience to these other states, considerations that apply to the other states could be brought to bear on the perceptual case, and that this would support intentionalism. At this point, to turn back to specific considerations about the perceptual case is to give up on the idea that the appeal to the intentionality of experience supports an intentionalist account of experience

### **§2 Conclusion**

The appeal to the intentionality of sensory experience does not support the claim that perceptual experience is as the intentionalist maintains it to be. It is true that perceptual experience fulfils the criteria we can give for a state being intentional. But there is no reason to suppose that all intentionality is non-relational. And the general considerations that bear on issues of the relationality of intentional in fact provide some, albeit not decisive, support for the alternative view; that the directedness of objects of perceptual experience is relational.

## Bibliography

Anscombe, G.E.M., "The Intentionality of Sensation: a Grammatical Feature" in R.J. Butler (ed.) *Analytical Philosophy: First Series*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).

Armstrong, D.M., *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).

Brentano, F., *Psychology From An Empirical Standpoint*, originally published 1874; English edition ed. L. McAlister (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

Byrne, A., "Intentionalism Defended", *Philosophical Review* 110 (2001), pp.199-240.

Campbell, J., *Reference and Consciousness*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

Campbell, J., "Berkeley's Puzzle", in T. Szabo Gendler and J. Hawthorne (eds.), *Perceptual Experience*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Child, T. W., *Causality, Interpretation, and the Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Chisholm, R., *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1957).

Crane, T., "Brentano's Concept of Intentional Inexistence", (unpublished).

Crane, T., *Elements of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Dennett, D., *Content and Consciousness*, (London & Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

Denyer, N., *Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991).

Dretske, F., *Naturalizing the Mind*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

Harman, G. "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience", in J. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives*, 4 (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1990); repr. in Block, Flanagan, and Güzeldere (eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).

Hinton, J.M., *Experiences*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

Hume, D., *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, M.A., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902).

Jackson, F., *Perception: A Representative Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Mackie, J.L., "Problems of Intentionality", in Mackie, J. and Mackie, P. (eds.) *Logic and Knowledge: Philosophical Papers* vol. I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

Martin, M.G.F., *Uncovering Appearances*, (unpublished).

Martin, M.G.F. "The Transparency of Experience", *Mind & Language*, 17:4 (2002), pp. 376-425.

McDowell, J., "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), pp.455-479.

McDowell, J., "On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name", *Mind*, 86 (1977), pp.159-185.

Putnam, H., "The Meaning of Meaning", his *Mind, Language and Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1975).

Quine, W.V.O., 1948, "On What There Is", repr. in his *From a Logical Point of View*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

Quine, W.V.O., "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes", in *Ways of Paradox* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.184.

Robinson, H., *Perception*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

Russell, B. *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919).

Salmon, N., 'Nonexistence', *Noûs* 32:3 (1998) pp.227-319.

Searle, J. *Intentionality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Simons, P. *Austrian Philosophy*, (LaSalle, Il. & Chicago: Open Court, 1995).

Smith, A.D., *The Problem of Perception*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Snowdon, P. "How to Interpret "Direct Perception"", Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Snowdon, P., "Experience, Vision and Causation", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 81 (1980-1), pp.175-92; repr. in Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Strawson, P. F. (1979) 'Perception and its Objects', in *Perception and Identity: Essays Presented to A.J. Ayer*, edited by G. Macdonald, London: Macmillan, 41-60; repr. in Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Tye, M. *Consciousness, Color, and Content* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000)

Tye, M. *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)

Williamson, T., *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).