



NEH Week 2: Varieties of Representationalism

Consciousness and Intentionality

- Background question:
 - What is the relationship between the phenomenal and the intentional?

Phenomenal and Representational Properties

- Phenomenal, representational properties = properties of subjects (alternatively, mental states).
 - **Phenomenal property** = property characterizing an aspect of what it is like to be a subject
 - **Pure representational property** = property of representing such-and-such
 - **Impure representational property** = property of representing such-and-such in such-and-such a way.
-

Question

- What is the relationship between phenomenal and representational properties?
 - Are there **entailments** between these? (Which direction?)
 - Is one class **reducible** to the other? (Ditto.)
 - Are phenomenal properties **identical** (or equivalent) to representational properties?
 - Representationalist: yes
 - Antirepresentationalist: no
 - Block: “the greatest chasm in the philosophy of mind”
-

Entailment I

- Do pure representational properties **entail** phenomenal properties?
 - Plausibly, no. A given content can plausibly be represented unconsciously, without associated phenomenal properties.
 - Weaker tenable theses? Entailment by:
 - Complexes of pure representational properties?
 - Special pure representational properties?
 - Impure representational properties?
-

Entailment II

- Do phenomenal properties entail pure representational properties?
 - Plausibly yes - at least for perceptual phenomenal properties.
 - A given perceptual phenomenal state by its nature presents the world as being a certain way, and is thereby assessable for accuracy.
 - Siewert, Horgan/Tienson, Loar, Byrne, ...
-

Identity I

- Are phenomenal properties **identical** (or equivalent) to pure representational properties?
 - Plausibly no, because of failure of reverse entailment due to unconscious representation (see Entailment I).
 - Only possibility: special contents that cannot be nonphenomenally represented.
-

Identity II

- Are (perceptual) phenomenal properties identical (or equivalent) to **impure** representational properties?
 - Plausibly yes, if the “way” distinguishes conscious/unconscious representation
 - E.g.: phenomenal property P <->
 - phenomenally representing such-and-such
 - or visually-phenomenally representing such-and-such
 - This requires that distinct phenomenal properties (or distinct visual phenomenal properties) entail distinct pure representational properties
-

Representationalism

- **Representationalism**: phenomenal property \leftrightarrow representing such-and-such in such-and-such a way
 - **Reductive representationalism**: terms on right-hand-side can be understood without appeal to the phenomenal
 - **Nonreductive representationalism**: terms on right-hand-side cannot be understood without appeal to the phenomenal.
-

Functionalist Representationalism

- **Functionalist representationalism** (Tye, etc): RHS terms can be understood in (broadly) causal/functional terms
 - “such-and-such way” = under an appropriate functional role (global availability, etc)
 - Amounts to a sort of functionalism about the phenomenal/nonphenomenal distinction
 - Most arguments for these views are really arguments for the representationalist aspect, not the functionalist aspect.
 - Standard objections to functionalism about the phenomenal apply.
 - So the good reasons to accept representationalism do not obviously yield good reasons to accept reductive representationalism.
-

Nonreductive Representationalism

- Phenomenal property \leftrightarrow Phenomenally representing content C
or: visually-phenomenally representing C.
 - Further: content C may also presuppose the phenomenal
 - Cf. projectivism, Shoemaker, Stoljar
 - P-representing object as having quale Q
 - P-representing object as disposed to cause quale Q.
 - ...
 - If so: doubly nonreductive representationalism?
-

Internalist and Externalist Representationalism

- Phenomenal properties are often thought to be **narrow**
 - Representational properties are often thought to be **wide**

 - Reactions:
 - (i) deny representationalism (Block)
 - (ii) hold that phenomenal properties are wide (Lycan, Dretske)
 - (iii) hold that the relevant representational properties are narrow.

 - (ii) = externalist representationalism
 - (iii) = internalist representationalism
-

Millian (Extensional) Representationalism

- Millian (extensional) representationalism: the relevant representational contents are extensional (referential) contents.
 - Typically: properties attributed by experiences
 - Standard representationalism: (e.g.) color properties
 - Shoemaker: dispositional properties
 - Extensional representational properties are typically wide properties -> externalist representationalism.
 - Shoemaker's view allows narrow properties, but with costs re attribution of colors by experiences.
-

Fregean (Intensional) Representationalism

- Fregean (intensional) representationalism: the relevant representational contents are intensional (Fregean) contents
 - In the domain of senses/modes of presentation rather than extension.
 - E.g. Fregean content = condition on extension
 - Cf. *Hesperus*: morning star (intension), Venus (extension)
 - quasi-descriptive condition, mirroring cognitive role
 - Argued elsewhere: all beliefs, perceptual states have Fregean (epistemic) contents
 - Maybe: phenomenal property = representing such-and-such Fregean content in such-and-such a way.
 - Phenomenal properties = (in effect) modes of presentation of extensions
-

Example

- E.g. red experience:
 - extensional content (property attributed): *red*
 - intensional content (condition on property attributed) = *the property that typically causes phenomenally red experiences*
 - So: the experience attributes (non-dispositional) colors, under a dispositional mode of presentation (cf. Shoemaker)
 - Phenomenal contents are mode-of-presentation contents.
 - Compatible with transparency: one always attends to modes of presentation by attending to referents.
-

Summary

Phenomenal property = representing content C in manner M

- Pure [manner = phenomenal] vs. impure [manner = phenomenal+]
 - Reductive [manner functionally reducible] vs nonreductive [not]

 - Extensional [content is Millian] vs intensional [content is Fregean]
 - Externalist [content is wide] vs internalist [content is narrow]
 - Reductive [content is phenomenal-involving] vs nonreductive [not]
-



NEH Week 2: The Fregean Content of Perception

Fregean Experiential Content

- Q: How can we analyze/explicate the Fregean content of perceptual experience?
 - Especially tricky if perceptual experience is nonconceptual: “nonconceptual senses”?
 - Strategy: Take a model for understanding the Fregean content of belief, and extend to the content of perception, by appealing to quasi-inferential relations between perception and belief.
-

Senses as Intensions

- Intensional model of sense: the Fregean sense of a concept = a condition on extension, tied to cognitive significance.
 - *Hesperus*: sense picks out bright evening object, extension = Venus
 - *Water*: sense picks out watery stuff, extension = H₂O
 - Sense can be seen as an intension: function from possibilities (of some sort) to extensions.
 - Sense of a thought (i.e. a belief, etc) = function from possibilities to truth-values.
-

Epistemic Content

- Epistemic model: senses = epistemic intensions
 - Possibilities = points in epistemic space, or *scenarios*
 - First approximation: scenarios = centered worlds
 - Second approximation: scenarios = maximal epistemic possibilities
 - For any scenario W , there corresponds the hypothesis that W is actual.
 - Epistemic intension of a thought = function from scenarios to truth-values
 - Corresponds to a belief's epistemic content: how it divides epistemic space
 - N.B. Need a basic notion of epistemic necessity
 - Here, epistemic necessity = apriority
 - A thought is epistemically necessary iff it is conclusively justifiable independently of experience
-

Defining Epistemic Intensions

- The epistemic intension of a thought T is true at a scenario W iff W verifies T .
 - W verifies T iff the hypothesis that W is actual epistemically necessitates T
 - Heuristic: if one conditionally accepts that W is actual, one should rationally accept T .
 - Formally: ' $D \rightarrow S$ ' is epistemically necessary, where D is a canonical description of W and S expresses T .
-

Examples

- The epistemic intension of my thought *I am a philosopher* is true at those scenarios where the subject at the center is a philosopher.
 - The epistemic intension of my thought *there is water in my pool* is
 - **true** in an “Earth” scenario with H₂O in the center subject’s pool
 - **true** in a “Twin Earth” scenario with XYZ in the environment and XYZ in the subject’s pool
 - **false** in a “Twin Earth” scenario with XYZ in the environment and H₂O in the subject’s pool
 - true (roughly) iff the subject’s pool contains the dominant watery stuff in the subject’s historical environment
-

From Thought to Perception

- The epistemic content of a thought is tied to its (idealized) cognitive significance: explicated using epistemic notions such as rational inference, or a priori entailment.
 - Q: How can we extend to the case of perception?
 - Do the relevant cognitive/epistemic notions apply in the perceptual domain, especially if it is nonconceptual?
 - Strategy: rely on quasi-inferential rational relations between perception and belief.
-

Endorsement I

- **Endorsement**: a relation between perceptual experiences and beliefs.
 - A belief endorses a perceptual experience when it takes that experience “at face value”. (Peacocke)
 - When B endorses P, it is impossible for P to be veridical and B to be false.
 - B may lose information in P, so that it is possible for P to be falsidical and B to be true.
 - When B **perfectly endorses** P, it is impossible for B and P to differ in truth-value.
 - Endorsement is a cognitive/epistemic relation, akin in some respects to inference, but between perception and belief.
 - We have an intuitive grasp on this relation, though it raises numerous theoretical questions:
-

Endorsement II

- If perceptual content is **conceptual**, endorsement is straightforward (belief invokes same concepts as perceptual state)
 - If perceptual content is **nonconceptual**, things are trickier.
 - But even nonconceptual contents can plausibly be endorsed with conceptual contents, if a subject has relevant concepts (Peacocke)
 - My view: the basic case of endorsement involves **direct perceptual concepts**, directly constituted by perceptual experiences (c.f. direct phenomenal concepts)
 - The question of whether pain, orgasm, anxiety are representational is reflected in the question of whether these states can be endorsed.
-

Epistemic Content for Perception

- The epistemic intension of perceptual experience P is true at a scenario W iff
for all possible beliefs B such that B endorses P , W verifies B .
 - Alternatively: the epistemic intension of P is the epistemic intension of B , where B is a perfect endorsement of P
 - The former requires only that all intuitive aspects of the content of a perceptual state can be reflected in the content of an endorsing belief
 - The latter requires (more arguably) that all these aspects can be reflected in the content of a single belief
 - This is the **epistemic content** of a perceptual experience: a sort of narrow Fregean content.
-

Content of Experience

- Q: What is the character of the epistemic content of a perceptual experience?
 - For a simple experience, involving perceptual attribution of a property to an object, the experience can plausibly be perfectly endorsed by a perceptual belief.
 - Then: what is the epistemic content of the corresponding perceptual belief?
-

Content of Color Experience

- Experience as of a red object
 - First pass: epistemic intension is true at those centered worlds where the object at which the subject is looking has a property that stands in relation M to red experiences
 - (strictly: the object standing in relation C to the subject, or to a marked experience of the subject)
 - Here relation M = *matching*. First approximation: disposed to cause in normal conditions?
 - Arguably, any perceptual phenomenal state with this epistemic intension is an instance of phenomenal redness.
 - If so: phenomenal redness = perceptually phenomenally representing this epistemic intension.
-

Generalization

- Let Q be a simple phenomenal property, instantiated as a simple experience P , where P is perfectly endorsed by belief B .
 - The epistemic intension of P (and of B) is true at those scenarios where the object standing in relation C to the center has a property that stands in relation M to Q .
 - Call this intension $E(Q)$.
 - Nonreductive representationalism: $Q =$ perceptually phenomenally representing $E(Q)$ [as epistemic content]
-

Further Questions

- Which is more basic: the Fregean content of perception, of belief, or neither?
 - We've analyzed perceptual content using an analysis of belief content, but this need not reflect the deeper relations between them two.
 - For all we've said here, belief content may be grounded in perceptual content (which is itself grounded in phenomenology?).
 - What is the relationship between direct perceptual belief and perceptual experience?
 - Attractive suggestion: direct perceptual concepts are partly constituted by perceptual experiences, and inherit their representational content.
 - If so, then in this case, perceptual content is more basic than belief content.
-