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INTENTIONAL PSYCHOLOGISM

David Pitt
California State University, Los Angeles

Over the past decade or so, a growing number of analytic philosophers, including Searle (1992), Strawson (1994), Siewert (1998), Horgan and Tienson (2002) and Pitt (2004), have been articulating and defending views of the cognitive mind on which there is an essential connection between the intentionality of conscious thought and the phenomenality of consciousness. In particular, Siewert, Horgan and Tienson, and I have argued for the following three theses: (1) there is a proprietary kind of phenomenology characteristic of conscious thought, different from that of other kinds of conscious states; (2) different conscious thoughts have distinctive phenomenologies of the cognitively proprietary kind; and (3) thoughts with the same phenomenology have the same intentional content. In Pitt 2004 (henceforth “PC”), I argued for (1), (2) and (3) on the basis of our capacity to, introspectively and non-inferentially, (a) distinguish our occurrent conscious thoughts from other occurrent conscious mental particulars, (b) distinguish our occurrent conscious thoughts from each other, and (c) identify our occurrent conscious thoughts as the thoughts they are (i.e., as having the intentional contents they do). The argument was a transcendental one: we would not have the abilities (a)-(c) if (1)-(3) were not true. The identifiability of occurrent conscious thoughts in this way entails that they have phenomenologies that are *proprietary*, *distinctive* and *individuating*.

The last of the three theses claims that thoughts with the same phenomenology have the same intentional content; but it doesn't say *why* this is so. In PC I maintained that the intentional content of a thought is a mind- and language-independent proposition of some sort (a set of

possible worlds, a function from worlds to truth-values, a structured n-tuple of objects or properties, etc.), and that the distinctive phenomenology of a thought *determines* which proposition is its intentional content. In formulating this view of the relation between phenomenology and content, I took my cue from representational theories of mind, on which thoughts are construed as mental representations of propositions. The two-fold task of a theory of this kind is to specify (i) *which* properties of a thought are responsible for its representing the proposition it does, and (ii) *how* having those properties results in its representing that proposition. On standard versions of the representational view of intentional content, causal or teleological relations between mind/brain states and world states and/or functional/computational relations among mind/brain states are responsible for their representing the propositions they do, and various features of those relations (e.g., that they conduct information about states of the world, or track content-constitutive inference relations) explain how having those relations results in their representing those propositions. In PC I held that the distinctive phenomenology of a thought is responsible for its representing the proposition it does, and referred to the phenomenology of a thought as its *representational* content, where a property is representational if it determines, in whole or in part, propositional content. (I did not attempt to explain *how* it does so.)

There is another way to see the relationship between cognitive phenomenology and intentional content, however: the phenomenology of a thought may be taken to *be* its content. That is, instead of *expressing* or *representing* its intentional content, the phenomenology of a thought may be seen as *constituting* its intentional content, in the way that the phenomenology of a sensation may be said to constitute its sensational content. A sensation is the sensation it is

simply because it is has the phenomenology it does, not because that phenomenology expresses or represents some other property. A pain is a sensation *of pain* not because its phenomenology *represents* pain, but because its phenomenology *is* pain.¹ (A sensation of pain is *of pain* in a sense analogous to that in which a pool of blood is *of blood* or a pillar of salt is *of salt*.) A sensation is a pain when it tokens the phenomenal type *pain*: its phenomenology constitutes its content. Similarly, in the constitutive sense, to speak of the experiential content of a perceptual experience is to speak of its phenomenal features. The *visual* content of an experience of seeing that the lawn is on fire, for example, is a distinctive sort of complex phenomenology. The *aural* content of an experience of hearing that hyenas have surrounded the house is another distinctive sort of complex phenomenology. Perceptual experiences may also have (express or represent) *intentional* content (*that* the lawn is on fire; *that* hyenas have surrounded the house), but the *experiential* content of a perceptual experience is just its qualitative character. To have an experiential content is to instantiate a phenomenal type. Hence, the relation between an experiential state and its constitutive phenomenal content is, broadly speaking, *tokening*.

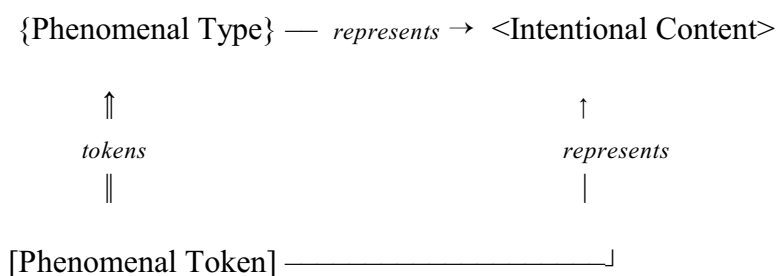
On the first way of looking at the relation between phenomenality and intentionality, the phenomenology of a particular thought is a token of a type that *represents* some other (abstract) object which is the thought's intentional content. A thought is the thought that p because it tokens a phenomenal type that represents the proposition that p. On the second way, the phenomenology of a particular thought is a token of a type that *is* its intentional content. A

¹ A reductive representationalist would say that the phenomenology of a pain is exhausted by its intentional content – viz., the tissue-property(ies) it represents. Needless to say, I am not a reductive representationalist. (Thanks to Declan Smythies for reminding me about representationalism in this connection.)

thought is the thought that p because it tokens a phenomenal type that is the intentional content that p.² This way of looking at the relation between phenomenality and intentionality also provides an answer to *how* thoughts get their contents: cognitive phenomenology *determines* intentional content because cognitive phenomenology *is* intentional content. Just as a sensation gets to be a pain by tokening a pain-phenomenal type, a thought gets to be the thought that p by tokening a that-p-phenomenal type. The phenomenology of a particular thought determines its content by being a token of that content.³

Let's call the first way of construing the relationship between phenomenality and intentionality the *representational view*, and the second way the *constitutive view*:

The Representational View



² Whether or not intentional contents on this view are *propositions*, and, if so, what the view entails about what propositions can be, is a question that will be addressed below. In general, I intend the term 'intentional content' to be neutral on this question, reserving 'propositional content' for contents construed as propositions (as normally conceived).

Some readers will be put in mind here of Husserl, whose general view of intentional content as phenomenal seems to be very close to mine. The second way of construing the relation between phenomenology and content was (arguably) held by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* (intentional contents as *species*), whereas the first way was (arguably) held by him in *Ideas* (intentional content as *noematic Sinn*).

³ If one had an explanation of the physical conditions under which a brain tokens phenomenologies of all the various types, one would have a deeper explanation, in naturalistic terms of *how* thoughts get their contents.

The Constitutive View

<{Phenomenal} Intentional Content>

↑
tokens
||

[Phenomenal <Intentional> Token]

The constitutive view is a form of *psychologism*. Psychologistic views (as I will understand the term) hold that one or another kind of mathematical or logical objects – numbers, sentences, propositions, etc. – are *mental* objects. The constitutive view proposes that intentional contents are psychological (phenomenal) types. (Hence, given that sensations, perceptions and thoughts (and, perhaps, propositional *attitudes*) are all the mental states there are, and that all of them are phenomenal, the general view of content that emerges here is constitutive-phenomenal: to be in any mental state is just to token one or another phenomenal-content-type.⁴)

Psychologism has been in very bad repute in analytic philosophical circles for over a century. It is widely accepted that Frege showed it to be untenable, since it subjectivizes what is objective, and, hence, relativizes such things as consistency, truth and proof in logic and

⁴ Hence, this account assimilates the intentional to the phenomenal, and pursues a uniform *constitutive* account of the relation between mental states of all kinds and their contents (cf. the “phenomenal intentionality” thesis of Horgan and Tienson 2002), in contrast to reductive representationalism, which assimilates in the opposite direction, pursuing a uniform *representational* account of the relation between mental states and their contents.

Note, as well, that the constitutive view is consistent with giving non-psychological abstracta (sets of worlds, n-tuples, etc.) a role in third-person characterizations of individuals’ intentional states. One could maintain either that phenomenal content is “narrow” or that “wide” content really is not *mental* content at all, but a coarse-grained approximation to it that is useful in some circumstances. (Cf. Balaguer 2005. I plan to address this issue in more depth in future work.)

mathematics to the peculiarities and vagaries of individual human psychology. But the thesis that intentional content is phenomenal is not so obviously wrong as the ignominious history of psychologism would suggest. For one thing, it can be construed in such a way as not to be subject to Frege's famous objections. To maintain that intentional contents are phenomenal is not *ipso facto* to commit oneself either to their being subjective or to their logical relations being variable and contingent. Moreover, the thesis strikes me as *prima facie* truer to mental life as it is actually lived than the views of mind and intentionality that have been at the forefront of research in philosophy of mind for the past thirty years. Normally, we can and do know the contents of our mental states, including our thoughts, by direct introspection. But, then, the properties of such states that determine their contents must be available to us from a first-person point of view. (If knowing that a mental state *s* has a property *F* is alone sufficient for knowing that it has the content *C*, then it must be that *s*'s having *F* constitutes its having *C*.⁵) Phenomenal properties are so accessible, whereas the relational properties typically proposed as content-constitutive are not. Our knowledge of what we are thinking, experiencing and feeling does not in general depend either on knowledge of causal relations obtaining between our brain states and objects in the world or states of our bodies, or on knowledge of the ecological functions or global inferential relations of such states.

The purpose of this paper is to develop the thesis that intentional content is constitutively phenomenal, to explore its consequences, and to attempt to come to a conclusion about whether

⁵ No matter what external states of affairs bring about the occurrence of *S*. What makes my thought that there is a baboon in the living room about baboons, and not orangutans or gorillas-in-the-mist, is not what causes it (or has caused it, or would cause it, or should cause it, or ...), but its introspectable phenomenology. (See PC, 11-13, 25-26, for an argument for the parenthetical claim in the text.)

it can form the basis of a tenable view of mind, thought and meaning.

TYPE-PSYCHOLOGISM

There are two ways of understanding the thesis that one or another kind of (supposedly abstract) objects are psychological. They may be identified with *token* psychological objects: for example, a number may be said to be a particular concept or idea in the mind of a particular mathematician at a particular time, or a proposition may be said to be a particular thought in the mind of a particular thinker at a particular time. It is to psychologism so understood – let us call it “token-psychologism” – that Frege’s famous objections that numbers are not ideas and that the prescriptive laws of logic and mathematics are not the descriptive laws of thinking most clearly apply.⁶ If a proposition is a thought token, then it is only accessible to the thinker to whom it occurs, it cannot occur to any other thinker, it cannot occur to the same thinker more than once, and the laws governing its relations to other propositions – the laws of logic – are the idiosyncratic laws governing its co-occurrence with other thoughts in a single thinker. (*Mutatis mutandis* for numbers as concept tokens. I will not be discussing psychologism about mathematical objects in this paper.)

But there is another, more sophisticated version of the view, to which Frege’s objections are not so clearly relevant. One may propose that the logical objects in question be identified, not with psychological *tokens*, but with psychological *types*. Let us call this sort of view “type-

⁶ Frege’s objections to psychologism may be found in Frege 1884/1953 (§§26-27), 1891/1952 (79), 1893/1964 (11-25), 1894/1979 (*passim*), 1906/1980 (66-70), and 1918/1997 (*passim*). It is a fact perhaps underappreciated by analytic philosophers that Husserl offered his own powerful critique of the kind of psychologism Frege attacked (in the “Prolegomena to Pure Logic” (*passim*), first volume of the *Logical Investigations*). It is, moreover, not clear that Husserl ever espoused psychologism in the form that Frege criticized. (See, e.g., Bell 1990 (59-62), Findlay 1970 (12-13), and Simons 1995 (113).)

psychologism.” If (as I will assume) types are themselves mind-independent abstract objects, then they are not subjective but objective, and it is not the case that relations holding among their tokens are *ipso facto* to be construed as formal relations holding among the types themselves. In supposing that species, for instance, are types, one is not committed to saying that contingent physical relations among their members are formal relations among the species themselves. (The fact that tokens (members) of the types (species) *hyena* and *baboon* are mutually antagonistic does not entail that a relation of mutual antagonism holds between the types. Indeed, this would be absurd.) Likewise, in supposing that thought contents are psychological (phenomenal) types, one is not committed to saying that any contingent relations among their tokens in particular minds/brains at particular times are logical relations among the content-types themselves. (Relations among tokens cannot in general *be* relations among types, since the former are (typically) contingent while the latter are necessary, and they relate entities of different ontological categories. This is, of course, part of Frege’s point; but what I am emphasizing here is that its truth does not militate against *type*-psychologism.) Moreover, one and the same phenomenal type can be tokened by more than one thinker, and by a single thinker more than once. Hence, indefinitely many distinct thought tokens can have exactly the same content, and one and the same thought can be shared by indefinitely many thinkers.

It has been objected⁷ that type-psychologism is not *psychologism* at all, but, instead, a kind of platonism. But this complaint rests on a false dichotomy. Type-psychologism (as I am understanding it) is indeed *platonistic*, given that it traffics in types as abstract objects; but it does

⁷ By Mark Balaguer, in conversation.

not follow that it is not psychologism.⁸ What makes a theory psychologistic is its identification of objects of some kind with psychological objects; reorienting its ontology from tokens to types does nothing to change this. Analogously, what makes a theory *physicalistic* is its identification of objects of some kind with physical objects – regardless of whether the identification is at the level of tokens or the level of types. Type-physicalism is not a form of platonism simply because it identifies mental *types* with physical *types*. It is a form of physicalism because it identifies *mental types* with *physical types*. Likewise, psychologism does not become a form of platonism if it identifies intentional contents with psychological types. What makes it a form of psychologism is its identification of objects of one sort or another with *psychological types*.

On the epistemological side, it might be objected that making intentional content phenomenal renders intersubjective knowledge of it impossible. Since token qualitative experiences cannot be intersubjectively compared, I cannot know whether yours are tokens of the same types as mine; hence I cannot know if you are thinking what I am thinking. Worse, since experiences are not intersubjectively accessible, I cannot know what yours are; hence, I cannot know what types they are tokens of; hence, I can never know what you are thinking – or even *that you are thinking* – at all.⁹

Of course, if physicalism is true, then phenomenal properties *are* intersubjectively accessible in principle, and the objection is moot. But even if token qualitative experiences cannot be shared, and cannot be directly accessed by anyone other than their possessor, it does

⁸ It might not be the doctrine Frege, Husserl and those they criticized were discussing; but that is a historical, not a conceptual point.

⁹ Cf. Frege, *op. cit.* – e.g., Frege 1918/1997 (334-335).

not follow that intersubjective knowledge of qualitative content is impossible – or even especially difficult. It only follows that it cannot be *direct*. But this is no more a problem for psychologism than it is for any other representationalist theory of content – at least as far as our commonsense knowledge of each other’s mental lives is concerned. Though I may in principle have access to your brain states and their counterfactual-supporting relations to each other and to your environment, in practice I do not. Nor do I need to. I do not have to perform brain surgery or put you “in the magnet” in order to know what is going on in your mind.

Since we are of the same species, and, hence, constructed along essentially the same lines, it is reasonable to suppose that what you experience in certain specific circumstances is a lot like, if not identical to, what I experience in those circumstances.¹⁰ It is no more the case that I cannot know what your experience is like unless I have direct access to it than that I cannot know that you have a liver unless I have direct access to it. If I know you are human, then I know (with, of course, less than absolute certainty) that you have a liver. (The fact that I *could* access your liver directly is irrelevant, since I can know you have one without doing so.) And I know (ditto) that if I poke you in the eye with a stick you will have an experience that is pretty much the same as (or identical to) the one I would have if you poked me in the eye (in exactly the same way) with the stick. Hence, though I cannot access your token experiences, I can have very good reason to think that – indeed, I can *know* that – you are having one of a particular type, tokens of which I am familiar with in my own case.

¹⁰ Indeed, without the assumption of a shared mentality, psychology would be impossible. Science seeks generalizations; but generalizations require a domain of individuals with shared characteristics. If we were not of the same psychological kind, we would not comprise such a domain.

To insist otherwise is, it seems to me, to succumb to the kind of peremptory philosophical skepticism that stifles inquiry. Surely I do not know beyond all possibility of doubt that you have a liver. You *could* turn out to be a mutant, or an android, or pure spirit, or a figment of my imagination, Still, I think I know that you have a liver. I have good reasons to think that you do, and no especially compelling ones to think that you do not. Likewise, you *could* have experiences that are very different from mine, or even have no experiences at all. But given that we are otherwise tokens of the same types, what non-arbitrary reason is there to believe that we are in fact so radically different mentally?¹¹

Furthermore, in addition to being hard-wired to have the same sorts of qualitative experiences on exposure to various mechanical, chemical and electromagnetic stimuli, we tend to share automatic *cognitive* responses to immediate circumstances – e.g., perceptual beliefs – as well. Just as it is reasonable to suppose that you smell what I smell when we stick our noses into the same carton of sour milk, it is also reasonable to suppose that the first thing you *think* in response to the stimulus is the same thing I think – viz., *This [milk] is sour!* We tend to form the same immediate perceptual beliefs in response to the same circumstances, in the same knee-jerk fashion.¹²

¹¹ Of course, there are well-known variations in perceptual phenomenal content among humans (due to age, race, etc.). But the fact that these differences are knowable is further confirmation of the claim that intersubjective knowledge of phenomenal content is not impossible.

¹² I recall Jerry Fodor once remarking that though Skinner was wrong that our *utterances* are stimulus-automatic (one does not *say* “Chalkchalkchalkchalkchalk” whenever one sees some), he got it right about at least some of our thoughts (we do seem to be constrained to *think* ‘chalk’ (once or twice, anyway, given that we know what chalk is) when we encounter it).

However (I will be reminded), though there may be objective criteria for determining the contents of some of each others' mental states, it is notoriously difficult – impossible, by general consensus – to determine *all* that a conspecific is experiencing or thinking on the basis of stimulus and circumstance alone. In general, the occurrence of mental states is not so straightforwardly tied to external stimuli (as Chomsky emphasized long ago). One of the more interesting things about us is that our mental activity enjoys a good measure of independence from what is going on in our immediate vicinity. Beyond the stereotypical perceptual and cognitive responses, there is little or nothing to be gleaned about the contents of someone's mind from local external conditions. If the remainder really were inaccessible in principle from the outside, we would be in large part irretrievably inscrutable to each other. Nothing short of mind reading would allow us more than superficial knowledge of one another's mental lives.

Fortunately, however, there is a stunningly reliable way to determine what others are experiencing and thinking on a given occasion – with or without conspicuous stimulus – without having to read their minds (or open their skulls): we can *ask them*. Given the assumption that conspecifics come pre-packaged with very similar (probably identical) conceptual, experiential and behavioral capacities, it is reasonable to suppose that members of a linguistic community pick up the same words to describe their common experiences and express their common thoughts.¹³ And, given that sincere declarative utterances are generally reliable indicators of what someone thinks, we can in fact have access, albeit indirect (and fallible), to each other's

¹³ Mommy says “Ouch! I bet that *hurts!*” when you walk into the kitchen with the stick in your eye because she believes, quite reasonably, that you're experiencing what she would experience in the same unfortunate circumstances. So you learn to apply the words ‘ouch’ and ‘hurts’ (etc.) to the same types of experiences and thoughts that she applies them to.

private moods and musings. Hence, type-psychologism does not have the untoward consequences alleged above.

A similar objection seeks to cast doubt upon appeals to phenomenology in the context of scientifically informed philosophy of mind. Given that (token) experiences are directly accessible only by those whose experiences they are, any disagreements that might arise concerning their structure or content will be irresolvable in principle, and, hence, phenomenologically-based study of the mind will inevitably be fraught with pointless and unadjudicable counterassertions of “what it’s like for *me*.” (Yes, we are conspecifics; so it is reasonable to suppose that our experiences are the same. But what is the nature of the experiences we share?) We ought to have learned our lesson about the perils of first-person methodology from the failure of introspectionist psychology. It invites endless squabbling over empirically vacuous claims, with no hope of resolution or genuine progress. Insofar as intentional psychologism commits us to such a first-person methodology (the objection continues), it is intellectually recidivist.

An example from the philosophy of perception will serve to illustrate what the problem is supposed to be. (Comparable problems arise for cognition as well.¹⁴)

There is disagreement over whether or not the perceived constancy of objects through change in the way they appear is itself phenomenally manifest.¹⁵ For instance, when objects

¹⁴ The question of the very existence of a distinctive phenomenology of cognition is a case in point. Some claim that it is obvious that there is such a thing, others that it is equally obvious that there is not. I try to provide an argument for the claim that there *must be* in PC, and an explanation for why it is not obvious to everyone in my paper “Cognitive Acuity.”

¹⁵ I am indebted here to conversations with Charles Siewert and Uriah Kriegel, and to their reports from the trenches at the summer 2005 SPAWN conference at Syracuse University. (See

move with respect to us (or we with respect to them), we see them as retaining their shape though we are also aware that something is changing. One way to get at what is changing is to imagine a two-dimensional projection of the object in question. (To keep the example simple, I will ignore changes in illumination, texture, shadow, etc., which no doubt also play a role in perceptual constancy.) Suppose it is a circular piece of cardboard, rotating slowly on a spindle. As it turns, the shape of its two dimensional projection (its shadow, as it might be) changes – from a circle, through a series of narrowing ellipses, to a thin rectangle, through a series of widening ellipses, to the circle again. There is some sense in which these changes are represented in our experience: we see something changing in the way the two-dimensional projection changes. But we do not see the shape of the piece of cardboard as changing; we see it as constant.¹⁶

The important phenomenological question is whether the constancy of the shape of the cardboard circle is phenomenally manifest – that is, whether there is an *experience* of constancy,

also Kriegel Forthcoming.)

¹⁶ One way to account for this involves distinguishing direct and indirect forms of Dretske's (1969) *epistemic seeing*, and assigning the perception of change to direct epistemic perception and the perception of constancy to indirect epistemic perception. One (indirectly) sees the thing on the spindle as constantly circular by (directly) seeing the changes in its apparent shape. Given the background assumptions (a) that objects do not change shape just because they are moving and (b) that the thing on the spindle is rotating, we know that its apparent shape would not change in the way it does unless it were circular; hence, we see that it is constantly circular *by* seeing that its apparent shape changes in ways it would not change unless it were circular. One sees both that it is changing and that it is not changing, without inconsistency. (This is analogous to seeing that a thing is white by seeing that its apparent color is green, in conditions under which it would not look green unless it were white, and seeing that an apple is rotten by seeing that it is brown and wrinkled. See PC 11, 25-26 for more discussion.)

(It might be objected that the work of this account is being done, not by the distinction between direct and indirect epistemic perception, but by that between apparent and actual shape. But this is not the case, since change in apparent shape is not inconsistent with change in actual shape.)

or only a *belief* in it. Is there a “what-it’s-like” of the circle’s shape-constancy, or only the what-it’s-like of its changing appearance (what is isolated in a two-dimensional projection)? Some (e.g., Kriegel and Siewert) say that there is a distinctive phenomenology of perceptual constancy, while others (e.g., Prinz and some time-slices of Yours Truly) say that there is not. The worry is that if the only evidence that can be appealed to by either side is its own private experiences, the question is unanswerable, and the issue entirely moot. There is simply no way to tell who is right and who is wrong. But this just shows that phenomenological approaches are intellectually barren: they can yield no genuine advances in our understanding of the mind.

I will not attempt a full-dress defense of first-person methodology here. The issues are many and complex.¹⁷ But I think it is clear that the skeptical conclusion is overly hasty and overly dramatized. To begin with, the question whether object constancy is phenomenally manifest is underarticulated, since there is more than one sort of phenomenology that might manifest it. The phenomenology of shape constancy in visual perception, for example, might itself be visual; but it might also be (or be affected by) some other sort of non-visual or non-perceptual phenomenology – such as a phenomenology of proprioception (one’s position or state of motion), or of imagination, expectation or cognition.¹⁸ Constancy could be *phenomenally* manifest in experience without being *visually* (or *perceptually*) manifest. It would not be at all surprising if failure to appreciate the variety of factors that can make a phenomenal difference

¹⁷ See Siewert Forthcoming for such a defense.

¹⁸ Such factors are also relevant to examples such as the difference between experiencing the front of a building as part of a larger structure and experiencing it as a mere facade (or seeing the facing side of a coffee cup as part of a whole cup whose back one cannot see and seeing it as half of a cup), and the differing senses one has of a particular place (a neighborhood, an intersection) before and after one is familiar with the places adjacent to it.

should lead to polemical stagnation.

Another way in which the issue needs to be clarified concerns the bearer of the perceived shape constancy. One might maintain that shape constancy is experienced as an intrinsic property of objects, in the way that color and size are. But one might also maintain that it is perceived as a kind of holistic property of entire visual scenes (perhaps something akin to a scene being perceived as *in late afternoon sunlight*, or as *containing something that is moving*). These different claims have importantly different consequences (briefly discussed, below). Failure to distinguish them might also lead to the appearance of irresolubility-in-principle.

Moreover, there may well be objectively undecidable (for us) issues concerning the structure and content of experience. But philosophy is full of undecidable and ostensibly undecidable questions, as well as intuitional loggerheads. Sid says that things are beautiful because we are aesthetically pleased by them; Nancy says that we are aesthetically pleased by things because they are beautiful. They stomp and fume and reiterate for a few thousand years, and get nowhere. But does it follow that aesthetics is barren? That would be too quick – especially given that not *every* aesthetic (or ethical, or metaphysical, etc.) disagreement is doomed to hopeless stalemate. Some things are just very puzzling. We do not know what to say, or how to go about finding out what to say. Maybe the answers are just beyond us. But others are not. And it is far from obvious that the mere existence of disagreements of this kind means that there is no fact of the matter. Perhaps the answer awaits further development of both sides of the disagreement – including identification of their presuppositions and commitments, determination of their theoretical consequences, and evaluation of their relative success at explaining clear cases.

If, for example, we suppose that the disagreement over shape constancy concerns whether or not it is *visually* phenomenally manifest, progress on the question might be made by taking each side's position seriously and investigating its consequences. Against the background assumption of basic psychological similarity of conspecifics, and armed with results and methods of empirical psychology, we may hope for resolution of such phenomenological disagreements. It hardly seems out of the question that a psychological experiment could be designed that would provide evidence one way or another. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine the kind of experiment that might yield tangible results. If shape constancy is a visually experienced property distinct from shape, color, texture, illumination, position, etc. (and changes therein) – as opposed to a property an object is merely *believed* to have on the basis of (changes in) its shape, color, texture, etc., in conjunction with background beliefs concerning local conditions and the behavior of objects in general – then one would not expect suspension of such beliefs to affect the visual experience of it. For example, suspension of the belief that objects do not change shape just because they are moving should not change the visual appearance of shape constancy. Whereas, if constancy is *not* a visually experienced property, but, rather, cognitively attributed on the basis of an inference from such properties in conjunction with background beliefs, then one would expect that suspension of those beliefs would have an effect on a subject's experience – for example, he might not be able to tell whether he is seeing something that is changing shape without moving, something that is constant in shape but moving, or something that is both changing in shape and moving.¹⁹

¹⁹ One might respond that change in background belief *causes*, without constituting, change in visually experienced shape constancy. But this is another hypothesis that ought to be empirically testable. And, in any case, some progress has been made from the original clash of

And if we were to suppose that shape constancy is perceived as an intrinsic property of objects, we would expect the removal of contextual cues from a particular scene to have no effect upon whether the object is perceived as constant or changing in shape. Whereas if we suppose that constancy is perceived as a holistic property of entire visual scenes, we would expect the removal of contextual cues to have such an effect.²⁰

A clever psychologist could no doubt come up with much more elegant and decisive ways of assessing these claims. The point is that the subjectivity of individual experience does not render it insusceptible of intersubjective investigation. The phenomenological study of the mind may have its difficulties, but so do all fields of inquiry; and its particular problems are neither vacuous nor insoluble.

Type-psychologism, then, is not vulnerable to Frege's objections, is really worthy of the name, and has no uniquely untoward epistemological consequences. There are, however, several other objections to it that must be confronted. The first, which is closely related to Frege's, would, if sound, be as devastating to type-psychologism as Frege's was to token-psychologism.

ENTAILMENT

In many cases, formal relations among types impose necessary restrictions on their tokening. For example, it follows from the fact that the type *triangle* and the type *trilateral* (i.e., *three-sided closed plane figure*) are mutually entailing (*t is a triangle* entails and is entailed by *t is*

introspective judgments.

²⁰ One might respond that perception of contextual cues triggers perception of intrinsic properties, and, hence, that the results of cue-removal experiments would be subject to alternative interpretations. Again, however, this is a further empirical hypothesis, and further evidence against the impossibility of objective progress on phenomenological questions.

a trilateral) that, necessarily, any token triangle is a token trilateral, and vice versa. Similarly, since the psychological state-type *pain* entails the psychological state-type *sensation* (*x is a pain* entails *x is a sensation*), necessarily, any token pain is a token sensation (though not vice versa). In both of these cases, the formal relation between the types entails *identity* of their tokens. In other cases, necessary co-occurrence without token identity is entailed. For example, consider a (bad) version of analytic functionalism according to which it is conceptually necessary that pains are caused by tissue damage.²¹ On such a view it is metaphysically impossible for the type *pain* to be tokened if the type *tissue damage* is not, since there is a logical connection between them. No token mental state occurring in the absence of tissue damage could possibly be a pain: if a pain occurs, then, necessarily, tissue damage has occurred, and has caused it. The necessary relation between the types entails that if one is tokened then, necessarily, the other is tokened as well – though the token pain and the token tissue damage are distinct states.

The worry about type-psychologism is that it is a *general* truth that formal relations among types entail metaphysically necessary constraints on their tokening, and, hence, that if thought contents are construed as phenomenal types it would follow that if one thought-type entails another, then when the first is tokened the second will, necessarily, be tokened as well. If that is the case, however, it would not be possible to token (i.e., think) a thought without tokening (thinking) all the thoughts it logically entails. The result would be, not that the laws of logic are rendered contingent, or hostage to the vagaries of human psychology, but, conversely,

²¹ According to *good* analytic functionalism, it is not conceptually necessary that a given pain state *be caused by* tissue damage, but only that it be a token of a type whose *function* in the organism is to occur in response to tissue damage. Thus it is possible for pain to occur in the absence of tissue damage – something the bad version precludes.

that human thought processes would be rendered necessary, and hostage to the rigors of logic. Clearly, however (and this is after all one of the sources of Frege's objections) it *is* possible to think in ways that do not respect entailment relations holding among the contents of one's thoughts. Whatever regularities there may be in the tokening of thought types are, for us, contingent. Frege emphasized that it is possible to think a succession of thoughts that are related, not by logic, but by (say) the contingent laws of psychological association. But it is also possible to think a thought without thinking *any* of its logical consequences. Moreover, it is a consequence of the finitude of our minds that we *never* think *all* of what follows logically from a given thought.

Frege's objection was that the course of human thought routinely overflows the banks of logic; hence, the laws relating the occurrence of thought tokens cannot be the logical laws relating their contents, and such contents cannot be psychological. The present objection is that human thought necessarily fails to flow very far, and indeed need not flow at all; hence, the logical laws relating thought contents cannot constrain their tokening, and psychological objects cannot be logical. The common moral is that, since psychological relations among thought tokens are not constrained by the laws of logic, whereas relations among thought contents are, thought-types cannot *be* thought contents.

This objection is difficult to evaluate. For one thing, construing thought contents as tokenable types is alien to standard philosophical practice. Thought contents are usually taken to be propositions, and propositions are usually taken to be some sort of singular, untokenable abstract objects (sets, functions, and the like). It is difficult to know how to use thought contents construed as types to think about the things philosophers use propositions to think about. So it is

difficult to know if the constitutive view really does have the consequences the objection alleges.

Further, a thorough assessment of the objection would require a clear understanding of the nature of types, including how they differ from properties (if they do), and of the relation between types and their tokens. It is obviously not the case that *all* properties and relations among types impose such restrictions upon their tokens. For instance, types are non-spatiotemporal, but may have spatiotemporal tokens; one type may have another as a distinct constituent (as, e.g., genus in species), without having tokens related in this way (rectangles, for example, are not distinct constituents of squares); etc. What one needs is a way of making a *principled* distinction between those type-properties and -relations that are token-relevant and those that are not. But it is not obvious how such a distinction is to be made. Finally, if one supposes that intentional contents are mind- and language-independent abstract objects, then one needs a *metaphysics* of the entailment relation (as opposed to merely a formalism that *represents* it) – again, a topic that has received less attention than one might hope for.

Now, it might be supposed that, given that we know that it is possible to think that *p* without thinking all of *p*'s logical consequents, it follows that the present objection has no force.²² This strikes me as question-begging. Whether the fact about how we think should be taken to be a *reductio* of the constitutive view or evidence that logical entailment of thought types does not constrain their tokening is just what is at issue. I suspect that this response issues from a representational conception of thought. In general, relations among representations are metaphysically independent of the relations among the things they represent. If the thought that *p* is a mental representation of the proposition that *p*, then the fact that we can think that *p* without

²² Charles Siewert and John Searle independently suggested this response.

thinking all that follows from it is perfectly consistent with the fact that p has infinitely many logical consequents. But here we are exploring a different way of thinking of thought-types – not as types of representations of intentional contents, but as the contents themselves. We cannot simply apply intuitions that are sound on one conception to a completely different conception and assume that they remain sound. The question is whether, *if we suppose that thought contents are tokenable types*, their entailment relations impose metaphysically necessary restrictions on their tokenings.

The same considerations block another response to the worry. Our question is this. If we suppose that thought contents are mental-entity types, does it follow that one cannot token a thought without tokening its logical consequents? It might be argued that *conceptual* contents *are*, uncontroversially, mental-entity types, but that it does not follow that you cannot token a concept without tokening the concepts it entails (you can *think of* (though not *imagine*) a triangle without thinking of a trilateral, and vice versa). And if thought contents are constructions out of conceptual contents, then it would seem that we do have a non-question-begging reply to the worry.

But this proposal begs the question in the same way as the previous one. Concepts *qua mental representations* of propositional constituents do not have their contents constitutively; hence, the fact that we can entertain a concept without entertaining all the concepts it entails is consistent with its having indefinitely many entailments. However, if concept-types are propositional constituents themselves, we have the same reason to worry about the restrictions their logical relations impose as we did in the case of thought-types.

Another way one might try to escape the worry is to claim that thought contents *qua*

phenomenal types do not bear to each other the logical relations that hold among propositions. So it might be that though, for example, the *proposition* that p entails the proposition that $p \vee q$, the *thought content* that p does not entail the thought content that $p \vee q$. This would of course comport well with the fact that one can think that p without thinking that $p \vee q$; and perhaps giving up the identification of thought contents with propositions is not in itself an objectionable move (since both are theoretical entities anyway²³). But it seems more problematic to deny that thought contents, whatever they are, bear logical relations to one another. For how else would we account for the fact that certain sequences of thoughts are characterizable as logical, or rational, and others not, except that the contents of the former are logically related and the contents of the latter not? How could we make sense of thoughts contradicting each other, or of two thinkers thinking logically compatible or incompatible things? We could say that thought content types bear certain special relations to propositions, and that therefore the logical patterns exhibited by the latter are (somehow) relevant to the former. But this is just the representational view all over again.

It seems to me, then, that the problem must be confronted if the constitutive view is to be given due consideration.

Perhaps our firmest grip on the notion of logical entailment is in the context of formal logical systems.²⁴ But what requires understanding here is relations among propositions themselves that hold independently of the formalism of any particular logical system – a metaphysics of entailment. At best our formalisms provide a way of clarifying and regimenting

²³ I discuss this issue in more detail in the last section of the paper.

²⁴ Some may suppose that this is the *only* understanding we have of entailment.

what appears to unaided intuition to be the case, and extending it to cases that are not intuitively obvious.

Entailment in a formal system is typically characterized in two different ways. A well-formed formula (wff) \mathcal{P} of a formal language \mathcal{L} may entail a wff \mathcal{Q} of \mathcal{L} *semantically* or *syntactically*. \mathcal{P} *semantically* entails \mathcal{Q} in \mathcal{L} iff \mathcal{Q} cannot be false in \mathcal{L} if \mathcal{P} is true in \mathcal{L} —i.e., iff every model for \mathcal{L} in which \mathcal{P} is true is a model in which \mathcal{Q} is true. Presumably, this is meant to capture the non-linguistic fact that, necessarily, if the proposition expressed by \mathcal{P} is true, then so is the proposition expressed by \mathcal{Q} . One thing that does seem clear is that semantic entailment is not a relation that threatens the constitutive view. For, to token the thought type that p is not for p to be *true*. Rather, it is simply for p to *occur*. Moreover, if p occurs and is true and p entails q , then, though q must be true as well, it does not follow that q must also *occur*. Further, if one *believes* that p , p is true, and p entails q , one may be *committed to* also believing that q ; but merely thinking that p is not believing that p , and a thought's *being true* does not necessitate that one think anything else. So, if logical relations among propositions are problematic for the constitutive view, it is because they are the non-linguistic relations presumably captured by *syntactic* entailment.

A wff \mathcal{P} syntactically entails a wff \mathcal{Q} in \mathcal{L} iff there is a *proof* of \mathcal{Q} from \mathcal{P} in \mathcal{L} (or, if \mathcal{Q} can be *derived from* \mathcal{P} in \mathcal{L}). This notion is relativized to a method of proof, typically consisting of a set of wffs of \mathcal{L} designated as axioms and a set of rules (such as *conjunction reduction* and *modus ponens*) for inferring wffs from other wffs. It is not clear that this is entirely apt in the case of propositions (as opposed to the wffs that represent them), however,

since it is not clear that the entailment relations propositions enter into are *licensed by* inference rules. Rather, they seem to hold in virtue of the intrinsic nature of the propositions themselves (something that cannot be said for well-formed formula types).

One may suppose that formal derivations are meant to capture objective relations among propositions themselves. But it does not look like formal systems will provide much insight into the nature of those relations. In the case of *analytic* (in the Kantian containment sense) entailment, perhaps the relation is part-whole (the entailed proposition is “part of” the entailing proposition). Analytic entailment need not present a problem for the constitutive view, since the claim that one cannot think a thought without thinking its *analytic* entailments is (at least) defensible (since the analytically entailed thought is *part of* the entailing thought). But what about when the entailment is not analytic (such as the entailment of $p \vee q$ by p)? Unless something substantive can be said in answer to this question, the cogency of the objection cannot be evaluated. Were we to suppose that propositions are sets of possible worlds, then the relevant relation would be *is a subset of*: to say that p entails q is to say that the set of worlds that is q is a subset of the set of worlds that is p . But since sets are not tokenable types, propositions as sets of possible worlds are out of the running to be intentional contents on the constitutive view.

(*Mutatis mutandis* for functions from possible worlds to extensions.)

Perhaps the pretheoretic notion of entailment is simply not clear enough to ground this objection to the constitutive view. The variety of logics, classical and non-classical, with their different notions of derivation and their differing views about which propositions can be derived from which, seems to suggest that the notion is a theoretical one, and hence to some extent up for grabs. So, perhaps there cannot be a definitive answer to the question what the *objective* relation

among propositions-*qua*-types that we call “entailment” would imply about relations among their tokens.

There are, however, some considerations that may afford a firmer grip on the issue. We have in mathematics and logic the notion of a *sequence*, in which one or more things – including abstract objects – may *occur*. Thus, the numbers one, two, three and four occur in the sequence $\langle 1, 2, 3, 4 \rangle$. Further, objects may occur *more than once* in a sequence: in the sequence $\langle 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4 \rangle$ the number two occurs three times, in the second, third and fourth positions. Hence, occurrence in a sequence is in some respects *analogous to* tokening, inasmuch as one and the same thing can occur in a sequence more than once. (Compare: the number two occurs three times in the sequence $\langle 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4 \rangle$ and there are four tokens of the numeral type ‘2’ in the expression ‘ $\langle 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4 \rangle$ ’.)

Consider now the sequence of propositions $\langle p, p \rightarrow q, r, s, t \rangle$. Such a sequence is entirely acceptable, mathematically. Note, however, that it contains propositions *without* containing any of the propositions they entail (other than themselves). If there is anything to the analogy between occurrence in a sequence and tokening, then perhaps this shows that tokening of a proposition p would not necessitate tokening of a proposition q , even if p logically entails q . A comparison with the occurrence of geometrical figures in a sequence provides further illumination. It is not possible to have an occurrence of a triangle (a tokening of the type *triangle*) in a sequence without having an occurrence of a trilateral (a tokening of the type *trilateral*), in the same position in the same sequence. The comparison suggests that, whatever the entailment relation is, it does not imply necessary co-occurrence of entailing and entailed *propositions*. Perhaps, then, we can say that entailment is some sort of truth-preserving relation

among propositions, which neither is itself tokened nor implies the instantiation of a necessary token-relation when the propositions are.

Though not conclusive, the phenomenon of occurrence in a sequence and its analogy to tokening seems to provide some evidence that the objection from logical entailment might not be fatal to intentional psychologism.

PERCEPTUAL CONTENT

It is widely accepted that perceptual states such as *smelling that the toast is burning* or *hearing that the crocodiles have hatched* have intentional as well as phenomenal (experiential) features. There is *something it is like* to smell that the toast is burning or to hear that the crocodiles have hatched; but these states have propositional content, as well – as indicated by the use of ‘that’-clauses in their ascription. The intentionality of perception has been understood by some (e.g. Dretske (1969)) as essentially involving *belief*: to smell that the toast is burning is (roughly) to believe (truly) that the toast is burning because of the way it smells, where the way it smells is a matter of the phenomenal character of one’s experience of it.²⁵

Recently, however, a number of philosophers (e.g., Block, Chalmers, Loar, Peacocke, Siewert) have argued that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience itself determines

²⁵ Not so roughly (following Dretske 1969 (79-88)): S *PEs* [perceptually experiences in some mode] that an object *o* is *F* only if (i) *o* is *F*; (ii) S “*simply PEs*” *o*; (iii) the conditions under which S *simply PEs* *o* are such that *o* would not seem to S as it does unless it were *F*; (iv) S believes that the conditions in (iii) obtain; and (v) S believes that *o* is *F*. (An object *o* is *simply PEd* by a subject S if S differentiates *o* from its immediate environment purely on the basis of how *o* perceptually seems to S (how it is visually, auditorily, olfactorily, etc. experienced by S).)

(A similar story might be told about introspection as well – e.g., feeling that one is bored, realizing that one has been thinking about foreign dental hygiene, etc. – though I will discuss only perception here.)

intentional content, independently of the deployment of concepts.²⁶ Such “non-conceptual content” is thought to account for our ability to represent experientially more properties than we have concepts for (e.g., one’s visual experience can be *of* a shade of green which one can neither name nor reidentify), and for the fact that unconceptualized experiences can have propositional content (e.g., one’s visual experience can represent *that there is food in the bowl* even if one does not, or cannot, *think* that there is food in the bowl). Non-conceptual content is usually taken to be a distinctive style of representation, as opposed to a distinctive (non-propositional) sort of representatum (though this latter kind of view seems possible as well (more on this below)). Experiences can represent the same propositions, by virtue of their phenomenality, that thoughts represent by virtue of their conceptuality.²⁷

The *prima facie* problem non-conceptual content presents for the constitutive view is this. If intentional contents are *cognitive*-phenomenal types, then for a state to have the content that *p* is for it to token a particular cognitive-phenomenal type. But if there is such a thing as non-conceptual content – i.e., if there is such a thing as *non-cognitive* intentional phenomenology – and the phenomenology of a state constitutes its content, then any intentional content would be identified with a number of distinct phenomenal types. The content *that there is food in the*

²⁶ This position is sometimes called “non-reductive representationalism” (see, e.g., Chalmers 2004), and is contrasted with the view that the phenomenal character of experience is *reducible* to its representational properties. (Similar claims, on both sides, can also be made for introspective experience.)

²⁷ It is unfortunate that the term ‘content’ is used both for the subjective “filler” of mental representations (what they are composed of) and for their mind-independent representata. Were we to dub the former ‘s-content’ and the latter ‘o-content’, we could characterize standard non-reductive representationalism as the thesis that non-conceptual s-contents can represent conceptual o-contents.

bowl, for example, would be *both* a cognitive phenomenal type – *qua* the content of the thought that there is food in the bowl – *and* an assortment of non-cognitive-phenomenal types – *qua* the content of the (visual, auditory, olfactory, etc.) experience that there is food in the bowl. But the intentional content *that there is food in the bowl* cannot be all of these different phenomenal types.²⁸

Were one to suppose that the intentional content of a perceptual state comes exclusively from the cognitive states it is accompanied by (or partially composed of), the intentionality of perceptual experience would pose no threat to the constitutive view. But the point of non-conceptual content is precisely that there is more than one way for a mental state to have phenomenally-determined intentional content. And this would seem to force adoption of the representational view of the relation between phenomenality and intentionality. There is no inconsistency in supposing that representations in two different styles represent one and the same objective intentional content. (Just as there is no inconsistency in supposing that there can be artistic representations of a single object in different media.) The constitutive view, however, holds that intentional contents are *cognitive*-phenomenal types; so it seems there is no room for the identification of such contents with other phenomenal types.

One way to respond to this objection is simply to claim that there is no such thing as non-conceptual (representational) content, and cleave to a view like the one Dretske has articulated. On this view, one may allow that perceptual states have intrinsic qualitative features, but deny that such features themselves *represent* anything. There are no doubt those who believe this on independent grounds, and would thus find this the obvious move to make. I am inclined to think

²⁸ I owe this objection to my student Alex Bundy.

that the non-conceptualist thesis is essentially correct, however. So I would hope for another response to the worry.

Another possible reply is to claim that whereas cognitive phenomenology determines intentional content by *being* intentional content, *non-cognitive* phenomenology determines intentional content by *representing* it. One would thus have a hybrid view on which one sort of phenomenology represents another: perceptual phenomenology non-conceptually determines intentional content by representing a cognitive-phenomenal type. One potential difficulty for this solution is that it incurs the explanatory burden of the representational view – i.e., that of explaining *how* a phenomenal type of a particular kind represents the intentional content it does – that the constitutive view finesses. On the representational view, a cognitive-phenomenal type represents a proposition, which is the intentional content of the cognitive state. Standard accounts of content determination (i.e., information-theoretic and conceptual-role theories) explain the representation relation in terms of (roughly) causal relations between mental state tokens and property instances, or among mental state tokens. However, assuming (as I do) that the phenomenology of a mental state is an intrinsic property of it, such causal-relational accounts are not available.²⁹ And while I do not think the situation is hopeless, it is not obvious how content determination is to be explained on the representational view. Identifying cognitive-phenomenal type with intentional content explains the relation between a thought and its content;

²⁹ The reductive representationalist view that the qualitative character of an experience is determined by the objective properties it represents is *highly* implausible in the case of cognitive phenomenology. Which objective properties could possibly be appealed to to explain the phenomenology of conscious thought? (For the same reason, reductive representationalism, on which introspection is displaced perception, also founders on first-person identification of occurrent cognitive states.)

but on the hybrid view, the further determination relation between perceptual-phenomenal type and cognitive-phenomenal type remains to be explained.

A third way to respond is to deny that the objective content expressed by non-conceptual representations is, in the relevant sense, propositional. It is a common observation that the content of non-conceptual representations is much richer than that of conceptual ones. A visual experience that counts as seeing that the toaster is on fire will typically also count as representing an indeterminate number of other propositional contents (e.g., that there is something in the toaster, that there are flames rising from the toaster, that the toaster is on the counter, that the toaster is plugged in, etc.). Moreover, it is not clear that there is a principled way to determine whether a particular proposition is expressed by a given perceptual experience. Does my visual experience of seeing that the toaster is on fire also count as (assuming these are all states of affairs subtended by my visual field) seeing that the toaster is made by Proctor Silex, that my own rueful expression is reflected in its side, that Granny is sitting at the breakfast table, grinning helplessly, that the kitchen wallpaper is blue, that the refrigerator door is closed, that the shrews have broken through the baseboards again, that the sun is out, etc., etc.? The very richness that makes perceptual experiences so useful (and so much fun to have) seems to entrain a degree of vagueness in their propositional content. Moreover, though it is reasonable to attribute to at least some non-verbal animals experiences as richly phenomenally detailed as ours, their lack of a comparable conceptual repertoire renders ascriptions of propositional attitudes problematic. Is the dog seeing that there is food *in the bowl*? Or that there is food *there*? Or merely that *there is food*? Or maybe none of these? The possibility of indeterminacy here suggests that non-conceptual contents, in the *objective* sense, are not the same kinds of things as conceptual

contents: non-conceptual s-contents do not represent (or token) propositions.

So perhaps one should say that though we invoke conceptual contents in ascribing perceptual states, as far as the purely experiential component of such states is concerned, our ‘that’-clause ascriptions, though useful as rough-and-ready characterizations of non-conceptual content, are never literally true. They are only literally true when applied to accompanying conceptual states (thoughts, beliefs, etc.). One may adopt the non-conceptualist thesis on its less common construal, viz., that non-conceptual representations are non-conceptual because the (mind-independent) contents they represent are *not* the contents that concepts represent. They may be related (again, in ways it would take some work to determine), but they really are a different species of representational beast.

I am inclined to think that this last resolution is the best motivated. The facts alluded to about the density and propositional indeterminacy of perceptual representations suggest that, though propositions can be useful in characterizing them, and though they might bear interesting relations to propositional contents, they do not themselves, qua non-conceptual, have propositional contents. As such they would not compete with cognitive-phenomenal types to be intentional contents.

This third resolution resembles the second, in its suggestion that non-conceptual representation-types are not propositional contents, but may be related to them. And the task of determining what these relations are and why they hold is similar to the *prima facie* problem for the second view. But there is the following important difference. The second allows that non-conceptual representations *have* conceptual contents, but denies that they *are* conceptual contents. They have conceptual contents in virtue of representing propositions. The third move

denies that non-conceptual representations have conceptual contents at all. The relation between non-conceptual contents and propositional contents is, on this solution, not representation.

In any case, there are at least two potentially workable resolutions of the second worry; so I do not think it poses a serious problem for the constitutive view.

PAROCHIALISM

If the content of the thought that p is identified with the phenomenology had by *my* (or some other individual's) thought, or even human thought in general, then it would seem that there could not be other humans, or creatures other than humans, who could think that p without tokening that very phenomenology. And this might seem implausible.³⁰ There is a pretheoretical intuition that there is more than one way to think that p ; but the constitutive view implies that there is not (at least if the content that p is Fregean: even the constitutive view could allow that different Fregean thoughts determine the same Russellian proposition).

It seems to me that the consequence is not problematic. For, consider the phenomenology of pain. I think it is intuitively correct to say that the phenomenology of pain is essential to it: no experience with a phenomenology in no way similar to that of *our* pains could be a pain. It seems wrong to say that other creatures might have different ways of feeling pain, if this means that their pains might have phenomenologies nothing like ours.³¹ And, given our

³⁰ I owe the objection to Mark Balaguer, in conversation.

³¹ Balaguer objects that “feeling like *this*” is constitutive of our concept of pain, whereas “seeming like *that*” is not constitutive of our concept of thought, and, hence, that the analogy with pain phenomenology is inapt. I would argue, however, that in fact the concept of phenomenology really is constitutive of our concept of thought, given that it is constitutive of our concept of conscious states in general. (See the argument on pp. 2-3 of PC.) The further result that leads to our having to accept that what is true for pains and other sensations is true of conscious thoughts as well is the *individuating* nature of cognitive phenomenology.

status as conspecifics, it is reasonable (though not beyond all doubt) to assume that the sensation I identify as pain is the very same sensation that you identify as pain. But once it is accepted that our thoughts have a distinctive sort of phenomenology that is content-constitutive, it ought to be accepted that thought contents are in the same boat as pain contents, and the intuition that there may be many different ways to think that *p* ought to be explained away in terms of the different phenomenologies of other, non-cognitive types (e.g., visual, auditory, emotional, etc.) that might accompany episodes of conscious thinking for other people, or creatures other than humans.

PROPOSITIONS

If thought contents are propositions, then the constitutive view entails that propositions are phenomenal types. This may appear to be inconsistent with widely accepted philosophical views about the nature of propositions – viz., that propositions are *sets* or *functions* (of one kind or another), which are not tokenable types; that there are more (and more complex) propositions than could possibly be the thought-contents of any (finite) mind; and that propositions are *mind-independent, abstract* entities.

Of course, ‘proposition’ is a term of art, and as such may be variously construed depending upon one’s theoretical purposes. Further, there does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to insist that once one has claimed that propositions are a certain sort of entity in one theoretical context one is committed to their being the same sort of entity in every theoretical context. One may maintain that though ‘proposition’ is generally used to answer to the notion of *content* or *meaning*, it may have different kinds of referents in different contexts. The propositions of logic may be one kind of thing, those of mathematics another, those of linguistics yet another, etc. Moreover, since *thoughts*, unlike formulas or sentences, are essentially

psychological entities, it does not seem out of the question that their contents might be psychological as well.

Nonetheless, the idea that thought-contents and sentence-contents³² are the same kinds of thing enjoys a good deal of intuitive appeal, and is widely assumed (if only as a working hypothesis). It allows for efficient explanations of a variety of phenomena, including language understanding (grasping the meaning of a sentence involves thinking a thought that expresses the proposition that is the sentence's meaning), language use (expressing a thought involves uttering a sentence with the same propositional content), the intentionality of language (it is derived from the intentionality of thought), the structural isomorphisms of language and thought (e.g., compositionality, systematicity and productivity), and the form of propositional-attitude attributions (the complements of 'that'-clauses are sentences because the contents of the attitudes are the contents of the sentences). If the best accounts of linguistic contents assume that they are propositions, construed in a particular way, then one ought not give up too quickly on the idea that mental contents are the very same propositions.

Supposing then that mental contents and sentential contents are propositions (of the same kind), is there anything that can be said in defense of the constitutive view?

In response to the objection that propositions are mind-independent abstract objects, whose existence does not presuppose or depend upon the existence of minds or their experiences, it can be said that the existence of phenomenal *types* does not presuppose the existence of phenomenal *tokens* or the existence of individual minds. (This assumes a transcendent realism

³² By 'sentence content' I mean the content of any sentence in natural language, including those with logical, mathematical or linguistic subject matter.

about abstract objects; but that is certainly a defensible position.)

One might also worry that if phenomenal types are properties of *conscious experiences*, then the constitutive view implies an incoherent “sentientism” about propositions: it requires that propositions *be* conscious, and, further, that they be conscious *to* an experiencing self. But it is absurd to say either that abstract objects are conscious or that selves are abstract objects.

I do not think this is a real problem, however. It may be that, necessarily, phenomenality is *instantiated* only by token conscious states, and that any such state presupposes a self,³³ but it follows neither that phenomenal types themselves are conscious nor that they must be experienced. Indeed, consciousness and selfhood are themselves types, but neither presupposes the existence of token conscious states or experiencing selves.

In response to the objection that there are more (and more complex) propositions than phenomenal types, it can be said that, given that thought types are composed of concept types (which are also phenomenal types), there can be as many phenomenal thought-types as there are possible combinations of phenomenal concept-types. The fact that infinitely many of these are unthinkable by us or any other finite creatures is beside the point. (This would require an account of phenomenal compositionality; but I see no *a priori* reason why such an account could not be given.)

The first objection – that propositions as standardly construed are sets or functions, which are not tokenable types – is, I think, much more serious. Though there have been views on which propositions are types [[(e.g., Barwise and Perry’s)??]], the view that they are not is so well

³³ I do not think either of these things is *conceptually* necessary. I say why in a paper in progress, “Phenomenality, Subjectivity and Consciousness.”

entrenched, and has been used in successful accounts of so many different logical and mathematical phenomena, that giving it up might seem too high a price to pay for the constitutive view. In giving it up one risks losing those explanations. So if propositions are best construed as non-tokenable entities, then if thought contents are phenomenal types they cannot be propositions.³⁴

So, perhaps the best response to the propositional objection is, after all, to deny that thought contents are propositions. They are better construed as some other sort of entities – perhaps of a kind closely related to propositions. An obvious choice would be to say that thought-contents are psychological *modes of presentation* of propositions – perhaps tokenable property complexes composed of phenomenal-concept types.³⁵ This would require an account of how phenomenal-concept types determine the properties propositions are composed of; and it might seem that we are thus, in the end, no better off with the constitutive view than we were with the representational view. Recall, however, that the main purpose of this paper is not to show that the constitutive view is *better than* the representational view. It is only to determine if it is a viable alternative to it.³⁶

Pressing on, however, one might weaken, or sever, the connection between thought-

³⁴ Loar 1988 presents an argument that the propositional contents of ‘that’-clauses in belief ascriptions are not the psychological contents of the beliefs ascribed.

³⁵ If their tokens are to be *mental*, they cannot of course be complexes of the kinds of properties propositions ascribe to objects. When I think that the family car has become a deathtrap, my mind becomes neither a car nor a deathtrap.

³⁶ A different but related burden on this account is the need for an explanation of how thought-contents are related to the things in the world we think about. Here I think some sort of causal account of reference would be sufficient. But this remains to be investigated.

contents and propositions, and hold that the former are really different kinds of things – similar to propositions in that they have truth conditions and bear entailment relations to each other, but unlike sets or functions in being tokenable types. And we might say that we use propositions to approximate them for certain purposes – communication, third-person propositional-attitude ascription, etc. (see note 3).

Or, finally, we might simply say that thought contents are not the same kinds of things as sentence-contents, but that they are nonetheless *propositions* in the perfectly legitimate sense of being *contents* with truth-conditions and inference relations to others of their kind. Though it is not clear that this view anything more than verbally different from the previous one. In any case, I think we can conclude that the propositional objection to the constitutive view is not fatal.

CONCLUSION

None of the problems for the constitutive view that I have considered in this paper seem to be in principle insurmountable. Problems remain; but everyone has problems. Moreover, if we take cognitive-phenomenal types to be a kind of propositions (or something closely related), then the constitutive view offers a more economical account of mental content than the representational view. All other things equal, then, perhaps the constitutive view is also preferable.³⁷

³⁷ I have had helpful exchanges on the issues discussed herein with Mark Balaguer, Alex Bundy, David Chalmers, Justin Fisher, Brie Gertler, Sean Kelly, John Searle, Eric Schwitzgebel, Charles Siewert, David W. Smith, Declan Smythies and Gerardo Villaseñor. Thanks to all.