

## **Siegel/Byrne. Phil 253/24.500**

Meetings 1 and 2 \* Introduction and Martin, “The Transparency of Experience”

### **Introduction**

#### **Some of our questions**

Perceptual experiences are either experiences of perceiving or hallucinating. There is something it is like to have a perceptual experience. Perceptual experiences have phenomenal character.

- ❖ What is the nature of perceptual experience? What kind of mental property do you have, when you have a perceptual experience? These are questions about the metaphysical structure of experience.
- ❖ What role, if any, does the phenomenal character of visual experience play in representing the world to the subject to the experience?
- ❖ Is visual experience usefully thought of as a kind of propositional attitude? We will consider three challenges to this view, by Mike Martin, John Campbell, and Mark Johnston (hereafter the Challengers).

#### **The Challengers’ views**

The Challengers think we should answer the first question (about the nature of perceptual experience) differently for the ‘good’ case of completely successful veridical perception, on the one hand (where no illusion or hallucination is involved), and for hallucination, on the other. (Ignore for now the question of where to put illusion).

In different ways, they each develop the ideas that

(a) in the good case, the phenomenal character of visual experience consists in a relation you stand in to things that you perceive, and

(b) although your standing in this relation may make it possible for you to go on to form propositional attitudes about what you see, it does not involve any such propositional attitudes.

#### **Martin’s paper**

Martin’s way into these questions is to contrast two views about the structure of visual experience, which he calls Intentionalism and Naive Realism. The view he calls Intentionalism takes experiences to be a kind of propositional attitude, whereas Naive Realism does not. The heart of Martin’s paper is an argument against Intentionalism. Eventually we’ll try to figure out what this argument is. First we need to pin down what each of these views are, and why someone might hold them.

**Intentionalism.** The view that Martin discusses under the heading ‘Intentionalism’ has two parts.

First, visual experiences are structured by an attitude and a content, on analogy with beliefs and other propositional attitudes. You experientially entertain the content that there is blue water nearby when you have a visual experience with the content that there is blue water nearby. Content, on this conception, is assessable for truth. And in virtue of having content, experiences themselves are also assessable for accuracy.

Second, the content is ‘object-independent’. Consider the visual experience you have when seeing Alex’s colorful tie. If the content of your visual experience is object-independent, then you could have an experience with the same content even if you were seeing duplicate-Alex instead of Alex himself, and even if you were hallucinating a scene in which Alex was wearing a colorful tie. It is not the case that to entertain that content (either experientially or otherwise), something must actually exist in the external world.

Intentionalism is the view that Martin is attacking. Confusingly, there are other views in the vicinity that are different, but are also sometimes called ‘Intentionalism’.

- Supervenience theses:
  - phenomenal character supervenes on content (no change in phenomenal character without a change in content)
  - phenomenal character supervenes on content + attitude
- Visual experiences are structured by attitude and content – allowing that content may be object-dependent.
- Experiences have intentional objects.

E.g., when a subject hallucinates a dagger, the apparatus of intentional objects is invoked to describe what the subject takes herself to see. The apparatus of intentional objects is invoked to explain how our practice of using the very same locutions, such ‘S sees a dagger’ or ‘S looked for a special fountain’ can be coherent, given that they are used both in cases where the thing seen or sought does not exist and in cases where it does. The apparatus purports to provide a single status that objects can have, whether they exist or not: the status of being an intentional object relative to such a report.

→ If Intentionalism is true, then experiences represent the external world. What kind of representation is this?

Hopes and desires (semantic) vs. Beliefs (stative)

Compare a hope that X is next door with a belief that X is next door.

In one sense, both the hope and the belief represent that X is next door. So there is a kind of representation that they have in common. Martin calls this kind of representation *semantic* conception of representation.

Another way to think of the semantic conception: while hopes and desires have contents that are assessable for accuracy (i.e., *that X is next door* is either true or false, once a value for X is provided), the hopes and desires themselves are not the kinds of states that can be true or false.

Alongside this similarity, the belief and the hope also differ in an obvious way. The belief represents the state of affairs in which X is next door as actual, the hope does not. In having the belief, you are committed to X being next door in a way that you are not when you merely hope that X is next door. So there is a kind of representation that the belief has but the hope lacks. Martin calls this kind of representation the *stative* conception of representation.

Another way to think of the stative conception: unlike hopes and desires, beliefs and experiences inherit the truth-value from the truth-value of their contents. If X is next door and you believe it, then your belief is true.

If perceptual experiences represent the world, then they represent in the stative way, not just the semantic way. If the pineapple is on the mat and you visually experientially entertain that it is, then your experience is *veridical*.

Question: what features experiences would make it the case that they represent in the stative way? Martin's answers on behalf of the Intentionalist:

- (i) Immediacy: experiences present objects as actually existing, in contrast with imagination.
  - ♦ Perceptual experiences are 'non-neutral' with respect to whether the content actually obtains. When you have a perceptual experience as of a pineapple on the mat, it seems to you as if there actually is a pineapple on the mat.
  - ♦ Contrast this with imaginations, which are not non-neutral in this way. When you imagine a pineapple on the mat, it need not seem to you as if there actually is a pineapple on the mat.

(ii) Epistemic role vis a vis belief: experiences have authority over beliefs.

NB: (i) and (ii) are independent. We'll talk more about how an Intentionalist (of any sort that accepts the attitude-content framework) should characterize the attitude of experientially entertaining in March.

### **Motivations of Intentionalism (=the Intentionalism Martin discusses)**

- It allows you to give a unified account of ‘matching’ perceptual experiences in the good case and the bad case. (NB: this isn’t a feature of the attitude-content view generally, since that structure by itself doesn’t place any constraints on the kinds of contents experiences can have. Also, Intentionalism isn’t the only view that allows such a unified treatment.)
- The same object can look different ways to different perceivers, or to the same perceivers at different times. So if you want to characterize what it’s like to see a pineapple, you can’t just point to the pineapple. You have to say something about how the pineapple looks. Which properties does it look to have? (eg, shape, texture, color, location, etc.)? Once you grant that the pineapple looks to have properties, you seem to have granted that experience involves object-property structure of some sort. And if experiences attribute properties to objects, then it seems that we can ask whether the object you experience really has the property it looks to have.

### **Naive Realism and its motivations**

## Martin's argument against Intentionalism

In this paper, Martin gives an argument against Intentionalism about perceptual experience. The argument contains a premise about imagination called The Dependency Thesis. This handout avoids delving into the interesting controversies surrounding the Dependency Thesis. We may talk about those issues separately.

### The Dependency Thesis

Martin's argument against Intentionalism takes as a premise the following thesis about imagination:

Dependency Thesis: To sensorily imagine a phi is to imagine experiencing a phi.  
(p. 404)

If S visually imagines sitting on a beach, then she imagines an experience of sitting on a beach.

### Transparency

What does Martin mean when he says that perceptual experiences are 'transparent to the world'?

378: "...introspection of one's perceptual experience reveals only the mind-independent objects, qualities and relations that one learns about through perception."

378: "experience is diaphanous or transparent to the objects of perception, at least as revealed to introspection".

### Overview of Martin's paper

Section 1. Intentionalism respects the transparency of perceptual experience (373-392)

386-392: semantic vs. stative conceptions of representation

two features of the stative conception of experiential representation:

- ♦ 'immediacy', aka 'non-neutrality' about actual existence. (Martin uses these terms to characterize a feature of 'attitude' side of experience as the Intentionalist construes it.)
- ♦ 'authority' over beliefs: Austin's pig example. (This is supposed to be a feature of the functional role of experience in the cognitive life of the subject.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the bottom of 390, Martin seems to grant that these features are separable.

"it seems inconceivable that one should be in a mental state phenomenologically just the same as such a perceptual experience [ as of a pig] yet not feel coerced into believing that things are the way that they are presented as being. That is, I claim that there is an

Section 2. Naive Realism also respects transparency and immediacy (392-402)

Section 3. Defense of the Dependency Thesis (402-413)

imagistic vs. non-imagistic aspects of sensory imagining (403):

just as charcoal and watercolor sketches can both represent red apples, so too redness may be an imagistic feature of a visualization (ie, an act of imagination), or a non-imagistic feature.

non-imagistic features “arise out of the wider cognitive project of which the imaging is a part” (403).

“the same imagery can be put to different imaginative purposes. one might imagine red apples, wax replicas of red apples, a cunning illusion of the presence of apples, while visualizing in the same way.”

Section 4. Intentionalism makes false predictions about the phenomenology of sensory imagination.

Crucial pages for the argument: 415-top of 418

#### **The structure of the argument in section 4**

Martin’s central charge against Intentionalism is that it makes implausible predictions about the phenomenology of imagining perceptual experience. Given the DT, the phenomenology of sensorily imagining just is the phenomenology of imagining perceptual experience.

What’s the implausible prediction? It can’t respect both the Dependency Thesis, and analogs of transparency and immediacy for imagination.

Dependency Thesis:

If you imagine an apple, you imagine visually experiencing an apple.

Analog of Transparency for Imagination:

“Reflecting on what one’s act of visualising [the ocean] is like, one can attend only to the blue expanse that one visualizes and nothing else. No surrogate or medium for the water or for the blue are evident to one in so imagining. In this respect, visualising is as transparent as visual [perceptual] experience” (413).

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internal link between the phenomenological characteristics Searle draws our attention to [immediacy] and the kind of functional role of perceptual states just outlined [coercion]. While I offer no positive argument for this conjecture, it is notable how difficult it is to sustain a plausible denial of it.”

Analog of Immediacy for Imagination:

“Having the visual [perceptual] experience of water puts one in a position which is not neutral with respect to the actual environment as to whether blue water is present... Visualising the water puts you in a position of not being neutral with respect to the *imagined* situation. In visualizing the expanse of water, one is not non-committal on whether the imaged situation contains a blue expanse of water.” (414)

**Question:** What if anything does Immediacy for Imagination add to the triviality that if you imagine blue water, then you imagine blue water?

For the Intentionalist, Immediacy for visual perceptual experience is respected by the attitude of the experience. If you ignored the attitude and just considered the content, you wouldn't be able to tell whether the state that had the content had the phenomenological feature of immediacy. So if the putative analog of Immediacy for Imagination just is the triviality above, then it is disanalogous to Immediacy for Perceptual Experience, at least as the Intentionalist construed it, in the following way: Imag-Immediacy is a feature of content of imagination, whereas PE-Immediacy is a not feature of the content of experience.

**NB:** Martin refers to immediacy of imagination as an ‘aspect’ of transparency on p. 413, which is odd because in the earlier discussion of perceptual experience, transparency and immediacy were separate things. One wasn't an aspect of the other.

### **A proposal for the Intentionalist**

The Intentionalist might try to respect the DT and the analogs of transparency and immediacy as follows. There is an attitude of imaginatively entertaining a content. Given the DT, the content includes that one is taking the attitude of visually experientially entertaining a (different) content. So if you imagine a red apple, then you take the attitude IMAG toward the content: VE (red apple).

Compare: Suppose you have the following sort of inner conflict: you wish you were more confident in our own predictions about sporting events. You admire the people who go around bombastically announcing that their team really is going to win. You want to believe that your team will win, but honestly you're really not that sure whether it will win or not. We might represent this situation as follows.

DESIRE (Bel [Team wins]).

Here, ‘Bel’ stands for an attitude. But you don't take this attitude toward the proposition that your team wins. That's your whole problem – if you took that attitude, you wouldn't have your inner conflict. What you desire is that you take the attitude toward that proposition. So although ‘Bel’ stands for an attitude, it is part of a larger expression (‘Bel [Team wins]’) that picks out the content of your desire.

Analogously, consider an Intentionalist about visual perceptual experience who also wants to treat imagination as a propositional attitude, and who accepts the Dependency Thesis. The natural suggestion is that when you imagine a red apple, you are in a state that has an analogous embedding of one attitude in another:

IMAG (VE [red apple])

That seems like a straightforward way to respect the Dependency Thesis. IMAG incorporates the actual attitude toward the imagined scene, namely that you are (only) imagining it. The VE part, embedded as it is in the IMAG attitude, reflects the fact that you are imagining taking the experiential attitude toward the content that there is a red apple before you. So you are imagining that a red apple is actually in front of you.

Can this proposal respect the analogs of transparency and immediacy for imagination?

If it couldn't respect the analog of transparency, then that would seem to be a problem with the Dependency Thesis, not with Intentionalism. It is the DT that tells us that part of what you imagine when you imagine an apple is that you are experiencing it. Martin thinks there is something about the way the Intentionalist construes the VE part of this that flouts the analog of Transparency. Our task is figure out what feature Martin thinks this is.

If we're granting the DT, then in imagining visually experiencing an apple, we are imagining an apple.

### **What's the argument?**

There are several statements of the objection. They divide into objections concluding that intentionalism makes a false prediction about the phenomenology of imagination, and objections concluding that intentionalism makes a false prediction about the truth-conditions of imagination.

### **Phenomenological versions of the objection**

415: “[on the Intentionalist account] it is much more difficult to explain the coincidence of the imagined immediacy of an imagined visual experience in visualising and our actual attitude towards the imagined scene.”

**Comment:** Why is hard to explain this coincidence? The proposal above has two moving parts: the IMAG part (which explains the actual attitude toward the imagined scene), and the VE part (which explains imagined immediacy).

What you're imagining is that an apple is before you in the usual experiential way. That's taken care of by the fact that you're imagining experiencing an apple. By Intentionalist lights, the seeming actual presence of the apple is reflected in the fact that you imagine taking the attitude VE toward the content 'there's a red apple before me.'



416: “What the Intentionalist is required to do is to explain how in imagining an experience with a certain content one thereby also takes up a similar suppositional [imaginative?] attitude toward the content of the imagined experience. And in taking up a commitment, thereby brings about the phenomenology of the transparency of imagery.

The perspectival elements of the visualizing require that they should be an element of the imagined scene and not an aspect of the actual scene. At the same time, the subject’s non-neutrality with respect to the imagined scene requires that he or she should be in some actual state of mind with the relevant content. But there seems to be no candidate state with both the right content and the right attitude to fit both conditions.”

**Comment:** The last sentence suggests that Martin is assuming that there can only be one attitude in the mix, and that it has to play both the role of imagination, and the role of marking the fact that part of what’s imagined is an experience with the usual sort of immediacy. Since perceptual immediacy is not at all the same thing as imagination, one thing couldn’t play both roles. But the assumption that one thing would have to play both roles seems false. What’s needed are two moving parts: one to reflect the ‘immediacy’ phenomenological in the imagined experience, and another to reflect the attitude toward the whole imagined scene, whereby it is a scene that you imagine to obtain, rather than something that you take (even if only experientially) actually to obtain. The proposal above has two moving parts, one for each of these roles.

It’s as if Martin thinks such attitudes as IMAG and VE would interfere with each other, and couldn’t be embedded.

**Upshot:** the phenomenological versions of the objection don’t seem very strong. The intentionalist seems to have no trouble accounting for the transparency and immediacy, construed as aspects of the phenomenology of imagination. If you get so far as imagining a VE of an apple, there is nothing further that you’d have to add or subtract to get an experience of imagining an apple.

### **Truth-conditional version of the objection**

“[The challenge for the Intentionalist] is to explain how such an image seems to give us the presence of the an imagined scene rather than a mere imagined experience of the scene” (416)

Background assumption 1: Phenomenal types of imagination can be assessed for accuracy. We can ask, relative to a situation, what would have to happen in that situation for the imagination to be accurate.

Background assumption 2: The accuracy conditions of an imagination are its contents.

Datum about truth-conditions: For an imagination of an apple to be accurate relative to a situation, there has to be an apple in that situation.

Key premise 1: If the content of imagination is “I am visually experiencing an apple”, then for the imagination to be accurate relative to a situation, there has to be a visual experience in the situation.

Key premise 2: According to intentionalism, condition that there be a VE as of an apple in the situation does not include that there is an apple in the situation.

Conclusion: Intentionalism cannot respect the datum about truth-conditions.

### **Comment.**

The proposal mentioned earlier, which granted the DT, treated the VE part of what was imagined as part of the content of imagining. But it is not obvious that to respect the DT, the accuracy conditions of imagination have to include that one is having a visual experience. Maybe the DT is just a constraint on the phenomenology of visual imagination, and doesn't make any predictions about truth-conditions of imagination. If so, there could be phenomenal aspects of imagination that are not reflected in their truth-conditions, and the DT could be a thesis about one of those.

This suggests that there might be multiple ways to construe the DT: as a constraint on phenomenology of imagination, or as a constraint on the accuracy conditions of imagination, or both. The residual question about the DT is thus what kind of thesis it is. Which phenomenal constraints if any does it impose on imagination, and what constraints on truth-conditions, if any, does it impose? What sorts of constraint (if any) does Martin's case for the DT in section 3 support?

### **More questions to think about**

- Why doesn't the Dependency Thesis predict that imagination is not transparent after all?
  
- Why does Martin think Naive Realism does better than Intentionalism at respecting the analogue of immediacy for Imagination? Martin stresses that by Intentionalist lights, the condition that one is experiencing an apple does not ensure that an apple is present. But this is true as well according to Disjunctivism! The disjunctivist construes the condition that one is having an experience as of an apple as a disjunction. Either you are in the Good case (eg veridically perceiving an apple) or in a bad case. That this disjunction obtains does not ensure that an apple is present.

You could try to reformulate the DT so that it is only about the Good case. Sometimes Martin talks as if it is a consequence of Naive Realism that what you imagine when you imagine an experience includes the presence of an apple. This in effect treats the DT as saying that if you imagine an apple, then you imagine

*perceiving* an apple.<sup>2</sup> But if that's how the DT is formulated, then the truth-conditional version of the objection to the Intentionalist does not get going.

- What is the analog of Immediacy for Imagination, if not the triviality?
- Suppose we grant Martin the implicit assumption he makes on p. 414, that the NR is entitled to ignore the bad case in applying the DT to get a prediction about what you imagine when you imagine experiencing an apple. Martin seems to make the following assumption and to reason in the following way:

Assumption: The metaphysical structure of experience gets imported into the content of the imagining.

Reasoning: Since Intentionalism and Naive Realism differ on what the metaphysical structure of experience is, they make different predictions about what is imagined. Since NR says that any actual apple is a constituent of experiences, it predicts that an actual apple is also part of the imagined experience. It can thus respect the fact that what you imagine experiencing is an actual apple. In contrast, intentionalism denies that any actual apple is a constituent of experience. Hence it denies that any actual apple is part of the imagined experience. So it cannot respect the datum that in the imagined scene, there is an actual apple.

Going with that, when you imagine experiencing an apple, your imagination as the intentionalist construes it is neutral with respect to whether an apple actually exists in the imagined situation.

Question about the Assumption: Why think that any facts about constituents of experience get imported into the content of what you imagine when you imagine an experience? Some people (eg some intentionalists!) deny that experiences even have constituents. So there won't be any theory-neutral thesis grantable by both Martin and Intentionalists to back up the assumption. If not, then from the fact that a [good] apple-experience as the NR construes it includes an apple as constituent, nothing at all will follow about what you imagine when you imagine an experience.

This is another version of the complaint that the argument from the DT thesis either seems to leave Intentionalism intact (if the DT is formulated in terms of perception or the Good case, rather than as experience per se), or else it seems to apply equally to NR and Intentionalism - since the phenomenological version fails, and the truth-conditional objection seems to target the DT rather than Intentionalism.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf 414: "when one visualises such an expanse of water, one thereby imagines such an experience and hence the constituents of the experience." Also: "...because the experience [as NR construes it] has as constituents the objects of the experience, one's actual attitude towards the imagined scene will be one of those objects being present." 414