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## §I

Perception has been a central topic in phenomenology since its very beginning. From Brentano, to Stumpf, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, a number of leading phenomenologists have extensively dealt with it. The present paper has three related purposes. The first purpose is to introduce a number of assumptions that are central to the phenomenology of perception. The second is to articulate a view that is built on those assumptions. The third is to defend that view as an alternative to current theories of perception.

A central issue in the theory of perception concern the relation between the nature of perceptual experiences and the role they play with respect to our knowledge about the external world. A phenomenological theory of perception aims at offering a description of the nature of perceptual experiences that explains the way they provide a warrant for our beliefs about the external world. The central claim in this respect is that perceptual experiences can bring us in direct, immediate contact with items in the external world, although their nature is not essentially relational. A substantial part of the present paper is written with the intention to make that claim plausible and to show its relevance for the understanding of perceptual justification.

The paper will mention and discuss a number of claims that are generally attributed to leading phenomenologists, mainly Brentano and Husserl. Some particularly controversial passages from Husserl's writings will be presented and discussed in details. The discussion of these claims and passages is meant to offer a contribution to their interpretation and to provide the historical roots of the argument developed in this paper.

The paper has eight sections. The next section introduces a view about the relation between consciousness and intentional content I call orthodox intentionalism. Its main contention is that the intentional content of an experience is manifest in consciousness. Orthodox intentionalism emerges from the discussion and evaluation of three central claims in Brentano's theory of intentionality. Section three presents two views about the content of perceptual experiences: anti-representationalism and the normative conception of perceptual content. The main difference between the two views concerns the issue as to whether perceptual experiences have correctness conditions. Section four offers an alternative that distinguishes the correctness from the appropriateness of a perceptual experience. Section five mentions how this alternative bears on the debate about the relational character of perceptual experiences. Section six introduces the main lines of Husserl's theory of perception and section seven shows how this view involves a ~~clear~~ rejection of the relational conception of perceptual experience without presupposing a

normative theory of perception. Section eight explains how the orthodox intentionalist can use the notions of direct awareness and acquaintance without having to accept a relationalist conception of perceptual experience.

## §2

Perceptual experiences are intentional: they have an object, they are about something. In this sense perceptual experiences are not different from beliefs, judgements, desires and emotions such as love and hate. This much should be uncontroversial. Views start to diverge when it comes to a more specific understanding of what follows from the claim that experiences in general, and perceptual experiences in particular, are intentional. Let me start by giving some definitions and by making some distinctions, which all have their origins in early phenomenology.

Franz Brentano, who is generally recognised for having introduced the notion of intentionality in the contemporary debate, has argued for three central theses. First, that intentionality is the mark of the mental. Second, that all mental phenomena are conscious. Third, that all intentional experiences are based, or depend, on the presentation (*Vorstellung*) of an object. Brentano's first thesis may be taken to involve the contention that all and only mental episodes are intentional<sup>1</sup> (~~see (Brentano 1995): 89 and (Crane 1998)~~). Accordingly, to maintain that perceptual experiences are intentional means to reject the reduction of a perceptual experience to a non-mental, for instance physical, process, state or event. Let me call this view *intentional anti-reductionism* about perceptual experiences. A weaker version of Brentano's first thesis would be that all, but not only, mental episodes are intentional (see (Crane 2007)). This would leave room for reduction. It might still involve the claim that mental episodes are essentially intentional, that a mental episode would not be mental if it were not intentional. This is *intentional essentialism about the mental*. Brentano's second thesis is directed against the idea that there could be unconscious mental episodes ((Brentano 1995) : 136). Following its most likely interpretation this implies that features, which constitute the mental nature of an episode, are conscious. If a feature of a mental episode is conscious then it is part of the phenomenology of the experience: it constitutes part of what it is like to have that experience. So the claim under consideration involves the contention that features that constitute the mental nature of an episode are part of its phenomenology, or, as I shall put it in what follows, that they are manifest in consciousness. Let me call this the *mental manifestation requirement*. Brentano's third thesis involves the claim that one can perceive, accept, reject, hate or love whatever is given in a presentation. In other terms: mental episodes of different kinds (involving different *attitudes*), such as perceptions, judgements, imaginations, and episodic desires, can all have the same object. Let me call this the *intentional homogeneity of the mental*.

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<sup>1</sup> See (Brentano 1995): 89 and (Crane 1998).

Brentano's three main claims are independent from each other. Together, they form a view that is typical for early phenomenology (see: (Soldati 2002)). Apart from the mental manifestation requirement, which was shared by most phenomenologists, the other two claims have often been questioned, modified, or rejected, even among phenomenologists. This has generated a variety of possible combinations. Some of them are relevant for what follows. Suppose thus that intentional essentialism involves not only the general claim that mental episodes are essentially intentional (that they are directed onto an object), but also the more specific claim that all the features that are essential to the mental nature of an episode are intentional features of the experiences (e.g. ways the object they are directed upon is given in the experience). Together with the manifestation requirement, this yields the result that all the features of a mental episode that are manifest in consciousness are intentional features of the experience. This is a position that has been rediscovered recently under the label 'intentionalism,' or 'representationalism', as a view that holds that the phenomenal character of an experience supervenes on its representational content. Applied to perceptual experiences, this generates the claim that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience supervenes on the way the object is given in the experience.

*Representationalism* is often associated to a naturalistic, reductive conception of the mind. But, as we have seen, intentional essentialism about the mental does not contain any such commitment. Let me then use the term '*intentionalism*' (rather than 'representationalism') in order to characterise the version of the view that is not committed to naturalism.

Intentionalism contains the thesis that the phenomenal character of an experience supervenes on its intentional content. This is supposed to rule out the possibility of an experience having phenomenal properties that would be entirely independent of what the experience is about. The converse thesis has attracted less attention in recent debate, but was widely accepted among phenomenologists; it is the thesis that the intentional content of an experience is entirely manifest in the phenomenology of the experience. This claim would rule out the possibility of an experience having an intentional content that remains unconscious. Phenomenologists did not always share Brentano's intentional anti-reductionism; nor did they embrace intentional essentialism (Husserl, LI V: § 15 (Husserl 1970): 106 ff.). Many believed that there are non-intentional mental episodes. And most of them would not have accepted intentionalism: they thought that some, if not all, intentional experiences have non-intentional mental features. But since they respected the manifestation requirement, and thought that the intentional properties of an experience are among its mental properties, they endorsed the view that all intentional features must be manifest in consciousness. This is *orthodox intentionalism*. It is not the view that the phenomenal character supervenes on intentional content, but the view that the intentional content of an experience is fully manifest in the phenomenology of an experience. Applied to perception it yields the claim

that the properties an object is presented to have in perception are entirely manifest in consciousness.

### §3

The starting claim that perceptual experiences are intentional was understood as meaning that those experiences have an object, that they are about something. Both intentionalism and orthodox intentionalism were however described by using the notion of intentional content. So one may surmise that these positions presuppose a distinction between object and content of a perceptual experience. As it is well known, Brentano rejected such a distinction, while most phenomenologists after Husserl, following an influential proposal made by Twardowski ((Twardowski 1894), accepted it. The simple presence of the notions of object and content of a perceptual experience is not much informative, however, unless one indicates more precisely what intentional content is supposed to be. So let me make some distinctions.

Intentional content is sometimes used in order to differentiate the perceived object from *the way* it is perceived. The starting point of this view may be the claim that there is no object that is simply perceived: an object is always perceived *in some way*. A dot, say, is not simply perceived, it is perceived as having some shape, colour, as being somewhere in (egocentric) space, as moving or as not moving, as changing in shape or as remaining the same, etc. It makes no sense to say that one visually experiences a dot as not having any shape, as not being in any location, not even in front, or to the left, as not changing nor remaining the same in time, etc. To visually experience a dot means to experience it *in some way, under some aspect*. If the dot is the object one perceives, the way in which it is perceived may be taken to be the content of one's perceptual experience. The content of a perceptual experience simply *is* the way the object is given in perception.

Following one influential line of thought the way the object is given in perception should not be thought of as some kind of entity that mediates between the subject's experience and its object. It does not determine the object, it does not fix the referent, it does not even represent the perceptual object. To perceptually experience an object, it is sometimes said in line with this view, is to exercise the ability to enter into a conscious sensory relation to the object. There are ways of exercising that ability just as there are ways of manipulating an object. In both cases, it would be awkward to think that the way in which the ability is exercised represents the object. If the way to perceive an object is taken to be the content of the perceptual experience, then having that content does not mean to represent the object as being some way. It simply means to experience the object in that way. This is *anti-representationalism* about perceptual content.

If one accepts this understanding of intentional content, then intentionalism would involve no more than the claim that a perceptual experience has no other phenomenal qualities than those, which are determined by a particular way of exercising a perceptual ability. Orthodox

intentionalism would amount to the claim that whatever is part of a way of exercising a perceptual ability is manifest in consciousness: one does not unconsciously exercise the ability to enter in a sensorial relation to an object in one way rather than in another.

Consider now Brentano's claim about the intentional homogeneity of the mental. If we accept that objects can never be simply perceived, but are always perceived in some way, then the original claim that the same object can be perceived, desired, thought of and imagined does not say much about what is supposed to be common to these different kinds of experiences. A more interesting way of applying the homogeneity claim to the position described above would yield a view that maintains that an object can be thought of, desired, imagined, etc. *in the same way* in which it can be presented in perception. This claim would in fact commit one to the homogeneity of intentional *content*: there is something common, say, between the way an object appears in perception and the corresponding way of thinking about it. This alone does not imply that there is no difference between conceptual and perceptual content. It implies, however, that seeing Bucephalus running and judging that Bucephalus is running have more in common than simply the fact to be about Bucephalus. As we shall see below, Husserl had serious doubts about this precise form of intentional homogeneity.

Following a rather different approach, the intentional content of a perceptual experience «determines its conditions of satisfaction» ((Searle 1983): 39). One might accordingly submit that the experience has properties that generate a requirement about its own occurrence. The experience ought to occur only when certain conditions are satisfied. The conditions that have to be satisfied are external when their obtaining does not depend on the occurring of the experience. By satisfying the requirement the experience is correct, or, depending on the nature of the requirement, veridical. The external conditions constitute the correctness conditions of the experience. Here is an example, based on a well-known analogy. The pointer in a car's speedometer has a number of spatial properties. It typically moves along numerals that are situated on a circle. The movement of the pointer has been set up in order to depend causally on the speed of the car. The pointer stands under the requirement to move to a specific position on the face of the speedometer when the car reaches a certain speed. The position of the pointer is correct, when the car travels at the speed indicated by the pointed numeral on the speedometer. The car's speed is the external condition. It sets the correctness condition for the movement of the pointer on the speedometer.

A central question in the debate about the intentional content of perceptual experiences obviously concerns the identification of the properties that generate the requirement under consideration and the issue as to whether they do so on their own, or by virtue of some relation to the external conditions mentioned in the requirement. Diverging views on these matters can still share the general thesis that perceptual experiences have correctness conditions in the sense

described above. Let us then fix our terminology in such a way that by ‘intentional content’ of a perceptual experience the views under consideration mean the correctness conditions of the experience. These views grant that perceptual experiences stand under the requirement to occur only when those conditions are satisfied. So we may call these views *normative theories of perception*.<sup>2</sup>

An intentionalist who adopts a normative theory of perception would be committed to the claim that the phenomenal properties of a perceptual experience supervene on its correctness conditions: two perceptual experiences cannot possess the same correctness conditions and different phenomenal qualities. An orthodox intentionalist who adopts a normative theory of perception would be committed to the claim that all features of the correctness conditions of a perceptual experience are manifest in consciousness: two experiences cannot differ with respect to their correctness conditions and share all their phenomenal properties.

The application of the intentional homogeneity claim to normative theories of perception yields the view that different mental attitudes, such as desires, acts of imagining and acts of judging, can have the same correctness conditions. This obviously needs additional specifications in order to properly apply, for instance, to the relation between beliefs and desires. The fact that I am eating a cake suffices to make my belief that I am eating a cake correct, but it does not make my desire to eat a cake correct. The difference arguably concerns the kind of requirement that applies to the states, rather than what the states are about. The belief that *p* is correct when *p* obtains; the desire that *p* is correct when *p* is desirable.<sup>3</sup> Homogeneity would apply more directly to the relation between belief and perception. My judgement that it is raining would have the same correctness conditions and stand under the same requirement as my perception of the falling rain. Contrary to what we saw above with respect to anti-representationalism, the fact that belief and perception have the same correctness conditions would not have to imply that one visually experiences the falling raining in the same way as one comes to judge that it is raining. One does not need to possess and use the concept <rain> in order to *see* the falling rain.

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<sup>2</sup> Martin uses the label *Intentional Theory of Perception* for an approach, which claims that the «idea that one’s experience might be veridical or illusory, correct or incorrect, is just built into the conception of experience as intentional» ((Martin 2000): 200). He quotes (Burge 1986) as an example for such a view and mentions a number of further authors who are supposed to have shared it (among them Armstrong, Anscombe, Peacocke, Dretske, Harman, Millikan and Tye; see (Martin 2000): 228–29, endnote nr. 14). As a matter of fact, Burge explicitly endorsed the central claim of the *normative* theory of perception in later work, for instance in (Burge 2003): 512–13, 516. But that does not mean that all authors in Martin’s list accept the normative theory. The simple fact that one thinks that perceptual experience might be veridical or illusory does not yet commit one to the normative theory. One must further accept the idea that perceptual experiences ‘aim’ at being correct, i.e. that veridicality is a value that applies to particular perceptual experiences by virtue of a requirement whose fulfilment depends on the satisfaction of external conditions. Considerations along this line also apply to the case of the speedometer mentioned above. It would not be right to say that a requirement applies to it if it had not been set up in order to properly indicate the speed of the car.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of desires there is a temporal dimension that does not apply in the same way to beliefs. One’s desire that *p* may not stop by the simple fact that *p*. More about this in (Gozzano forthcoming).

The two conceptions of intentional content I have described so far do not cover all the options that are available in this domain. Among the many refinements and variants one would need to consider, there are two, which are particularly relevant for what follows. The first one concerns anti-representationalism. According to that view the intentional content of a perceptual experience should not be specified in terms of its correctness conditions. This should not be understood as preventing the position from specifying some other kind of conditions under which a perceptual experience is appropriate. The second refinement concerns normative theories of perception. It might be wondered whether one might not accept the idea that the intentional content of perceptual experiences is specified in terms of correctness conditions without endorsing the further claim that the experiences themselves stand under a normative requirement. In the next section I shall discuss the first refinement. I shall only briefly mention the second refinement in my discussion of Husserl's theory of perception.

#### §4

In what sense can a perceptual experience be appropriate if one supposes that its intentional content cannot be specified in terms of conditions that have to be satisfied for the experience to correctly represent the world? Let me first introduce, without aiming at arguing for, some background assumptions needed in order to formulate what I take to be the best way to answer that question. I shall have to be rather dogmatic about those assumptions. I have been more explicit about some of them in (Soldati 2012).

Perceptual experiences *fallibly justify* beliefs about the external world. A perceptual experience provides a *fallible* justification for a belief about the external world in so far as it is of a type that has instances that are compatible with the falsity of the belief they justify. A perceptual experience *justifies* a belief about the external world in so far as it is an experience of a type that has at least one instance that provides a reason for a belief about the external world. The reason provided by a perceptual experience is a fact that speaks for the truth of a belief about the external world. Not a fact in the external world as such is a reason, however, but a fact made available to the subject by an experience. There are no (epistemic) reasons if there is no subject capable of experiencing facts as reasons for beliefs. Experiencing facts as reasons is a basic capacity of subjects. A perceptual experience can provide a reason for a belief about the external world, but it does not as such constitute a reason for that kind of belief. A perceptual experience can justify a belief about the external world without providing a reason. This is the case when the belief based on the experience is false, although it is justified by it. An epistemic warrant is a good carried by a particular perceptual experience. Different perceptual experiences of the same type can carry different kinds of warrant. An epistemic warrant is *defeasible* when there are considerations whose

truth would remove its warranting function. An epistemic warrant is indefeasible when there is no consideration that could jeopardise its warranting function.

Here is an example. Consider my present visual experience of the falling rain. Suppose I really see the falling rain. My experience fallibly justifies my belief that it is raining; it provides me with a reason to form that belief and carries an indefeasible warrant for it. My experience is a case of me being directly aware of the falling rain. By being directly aware of the falling rain my experience provides me with a reason to believe that it is raining. The reason is the experienced fact that it is raining and that fact speaks in favour of the truth of my belief that it is raining. If I directly experience the falling rain, then there is no consideration that could destroy the warrant I thereby obtain for the belief that it is raining. The justification provided by my visual experience is nevertheless fallible because my experience is of a type that has instances that are compatible with the falsity of the belief based on them. It may visually seem to me that it is raining, although it is not, and so I may be justified in forming the false belief that it is raining. In such a case my visual experience justifies my belief, but it fails to provide a reason for it. A visual experience could not justify the belief that it is raining if it were not of a type that has instances that provide a reason to form the relevant belief about the external world.

A perceptual experience is *appropriate* when it provides me with a reason to form a true belief about the external world. It is inappropriate when it fails to do so. A perceptual experience that provides me with a reason to form a true belief carries an indefeasible warrant. So a perceptual experience is appropriate when it carries an indefeasible warrant. But this does not imply that the intentional content of the experience must be spelled out in terms of correctness conditions; the experience does not need to *represent* the world as satisfying certain conditions in order to be appropriate. And so it is not the case that the experience ought to occur only if its correctness conditions are satisfied. The experience is not submitted to the kind of requirement postulated by the normative theory of perception.

Here is a further example. Contrast the following two situations. Situation A: you look at two lines of different length on a white sheet of paper. The two lines appear to you as being of different length. On the basis of your visual experience you form the true belief that the two lines are of different length. Your belief is justified by your perceptual experience. The experience provides you with a reason to believe that the two lines are of different length. It carries an indefeasible warrant for your belief. Situation B: you look at two lines of the same length that visually appear to you as being of different length (the Müller-Lyer illusion). Not knowing about the illusion, you form the false belief that the two lines are of different length. Your belief is justified because your experience is of a type that has instances that do provide a reason, such as in situation A. But your experience fails to provide you with a reason to believe that the two lines are of different length. This is why it is inappropriate. In the two situations, the two lines appear to

you in the same way, as being of different length. In this sense the two experiences are of the same kind. Both justify, but only one provides an indefeasible warrant. None of them represents the world incorrectly. In both situations the world appears in the way it should appear. The two lines in situation B appear in the same way as two lines of in situation A. This simply is how things appear under those conditions.

## §5

One central question in the theory of perception concerns the metaphysical status of the intentional relation to the object. So-called relational views maintain that perceptual experiences depend on their object. These views lead to a disjunctivist conception of perceptual experience, a conception that maintains that veridical and non-veridical perceptual experience are of a fundamentally different kind.

What is the connection between the relational conception of perceptual experience and the two views about intentional content presented above? In the case of normative theories of perception the answer is straightforward. If the intentional content of a perceptual experience is constituted by its correctness conditions, then the intentional content of a perceptual experience does not depend on those conditions being satisfied. So, even if the *possession* of the correctness conditions depends on some relation between the subject and her environment, the experience itself has the content it has independently of the *satisfaction* of those conditions. With respect to the content of a perceptual experience, this is a non-relational conception of perceptual experience. Things are more delicate when it comes to non-representational conceptions of intentional content. If the intentional content of a perceptual experience is a way of appearing, and a way of appearing is a way of exercising a sensory ability, and if it is part of the notion of the exercise of such a sensory ability that one stands in relation to an object, then this view would lend itself to a relational conception of perceptual experience.

In what follows I shall introduce some elements of Husserl's theory of perception in order to argue for a position that shares some central claims with the non-representational view without endorsing a relational conception of perceptual experience. We shall see that Husserl's theory of perception is an instance of a form of *non-representational orthodox intentionalism* that rejects the relational conception of perceptual experience. The view can best be understood as accepting the idea that perceptual experiences can be appropriate without supposing that they have correctness conditions.

## §6

The *5th Logical Investigation* contains a central passage for Husserl's notion of experience, and especially of perceptual experience. Husserl writes, speaking about the «popular notion» of experience:

To experience outer events meant [following the popular conception] to *have* certain acts of perception [...] directed upon them. This 'having' at once furnishes an instance of the quite different 'experiencing' [...]. This [...] means that certain contents help to constitute a unity of consciousness, enter into the phenomenologically unified stream of consciousness of an empirical ego. This itself is a real whole, in reality made up of manifold parts, each of which may be said to be 'experienced'. [...] There is no difference between the experienced or conscious content and the experience itself. If, however, an experience 'directs itself' to an object distinguishable from itself, as, e.g., external perception directs itself to a perceived object, [...] such an object is not experienced or conscious in the sense to be established here, but perceived [...]. ((Husserl 1970): 85)

Husserl maintains that there is a sense in which a subject *has*, and thus 'experiences', an experience that is different from the sense in which a subject experiences an item in the external world. A subject has an experience when the experience occurs in a unified stream of consciousness. So the subject does not 'experience the experience' in the way in which she experiences an object in the external world. The experience itself is identical to a conscious content. So to have an experience means for a subject to have some kind of conscious content. Husserl explicitly mentions perception as belonging to the realm of experience (see also (Husserl 2005) : 63). And he insists on the fact that the experienced object of perception is not identical, not even partially identical, to the experience as it occurs in the stream of consciousness. Since however an experience is nothing more than a conscious content, a perceptual experience has a content that is not identical to the object of perception. The content one experiences in perception, the item that thus occurs in the stream of consciousness, is not, not even partially, identical to the object of perception.

Husserl's notion of intentionality is clearly influenced by Brentano. In *LIV* (Ch. 2) he discusses Brentano's view and terminologically stipulates: «The qualifying adjective 'intentional' names [...] the peculiarity of intending, of referring to what is objectual [ein gegenständliches]» ((Husserl 1970): 101; for the specific case of perception see: (Husserl 2005): 330). So for Husserl an experience in general, and a perceptual experience in particular, is intentional by virtue of having an object, in such a way that the experience can be said to be about that object or to refer to it. This is a stipulation about the *concept* of intentionality, not an analysis of the feature we are thereby attributing to an experience. Husserl adopts Brentano's terminology, but that does not mean that he follows his views about the phenomenon. In fact he does not. Two points about the analysis of the intentional nature of perception are important in our context. First Husserl thinks

that only concrete particulars, material entities, whether dependent or independent, can be *direct objects of simple sensory perception*. Second, he analyses intentionality in terms of content, and conceives content in terms of ways of appearing. Let me discuss these two points in more details.

Husserl's provides details about the relation between *simple seeing* and *propositional, predicative* and *attributive seeing* in Chapter 6 of *LI VI* (cf. (Husserl 1984): B131). Here are some central passages:

Certainly one can tell one's auditors [...] that 'I see that this paper is white', but the thought behind such talk need not be that the meaning of this spoken sentence expresses a *mere act of seeing*. ((Husserl 1970), 273).

I can see colour, but not *being*-coloured. I can feel smoothness, but not *being*-smooth. I can hear a sound, but not that something *is* sounding. So [...] we are [...] saying and maintaining *that being is absolutely imperceptible*. ((Husserl 1970): 277).

The 'a' and the 'the', the 'and' and the 'or', the 'if' and the 'then', the 'all' and the 'none', the 'something' and the 'nothing', the forms of quantity and the determinations of number etc. - all these are meaningful elements, but we should look in vain for their objective correlates [...] in the sphere of real objects, which is in fact no other than the sphere of *objects of possible sense-perception*. ((Husserl 1970): 276)

When Husserl speaks of *mere or simple seeing*, of pure *sense-perception*, he means a simple sensorial intentional experience. An intentional experience is sensorial when it has sensorial qualities that play a role in determining the intentional content of the experience. This is relevant for at least two reasons. First, because Husserl thinks that there are experiences, such as acts of judging, that have non-sensorial qualities (see (Soldati 2005)). And, second, because an experience is not a perception simply by virtue of having sensorial qualities: those qualities have to play a specific role with respect to the intentional content of the experience. The experience is *simple* when, as a particular whole, it does not depend on (is not founded on) other acts. Husserl takes this kind of simplicity to be constitutive of the realm of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*), as opposed to the realm of understanding (*Verstand*) ((Husserl 1970) : 286). There is no need to experience a given object in some other way (e.g.: in judging or imagining) in order to be able to perceive it. So simple perceptions are experiences that are not founded on other acts and that have an intentional content, which is (partly) determined by their sensorial qualities.

The question Husserl addresses in the context quoted above is whether all components of the state-of-affairs that is accepted in a judgement are objects, or components of objects, of a simple perception. His answer is negative. Although one may *state* that one sees that something is so-and-so, one cannot *simply* see that something is so-and-so. So the assertion, when appropriate, expresses more than an experience of simple seeing. Simple perceptions have particulars as objects. They can be *independent*, such as a piece of paper, a tone or the town of Cologne, or *dependent* ('moments', as Husserl would call them, 'tropes' as they are now called), such as a particular colour, the smoothness of a surface or the pitch of a tone. States-of-affairs, universal properties and logical relations cannot be objects of simple seeing. They require more complex

acts, acts that are founded on other acts. Among the distinctive features that cannot be detected by simple perception there are existence and exemplification, being so-and-so. One can simply see the apple, but one can't simply see the existence of the apple; one can simply see the apple's particular redness, but one can't simply see the apple being red.

Simple perception, says Husserl, is direct, unmediated. What he means is quite clear: one is not perceptually aware of a material object by virtue of being aware *of* some other entity. In other terms: there is no other intentional experience one needs to have in order to be perceptually aware of an object. Stated in this way the claim is a consequence of the simplicity claim. Perceptual experiences are direct by virtue of not depending on any other act. Husserl emphatically wants to deny that one perceives an object by virtue being aware of sense-data. Sensations or, more precisely, the sensory quality of perceptual experiences, do not play the role of objects of awareness. Husserl writes: «sensations [...] are [...] experienced, but they do not appear as objects» ((Husserl 1970): 105).

Husserl's claim that perception is simple and direct has been considered to offer a ground for calling him a 'naïve realist' (Mulligan 1995, 169), or even a 'disjunctivist' ((Mulligan 1995, 213), (Smith 2008)). Others have protested that accepting direct perception is not yet to be a 'direct realist' (Philipse 1995, 266). Mulligan thinks that Husserl is a disjunctivist and a realist; A.D. Smith thinks that he is a disjunctivist and an idealist. Hopp argues for a form of moderate disjunctivism that would be compatible with central claims in Husserl's theory, without having to move into idealism ((Hopp 2011): 172 ff). Terminology can be misleading in this context. But one can find in Husserl's views on the matter enough resources in order to articulate a coherent position that rejects disjunctivism (the idea that veridical and non-veridical perceptual experience are experiences of a fundamentally different kind) and accepts direct realism (the idea that in sensory perception we are *directly acquainted* with concrete particulars). Let me show how this is possible.

## §7

One finds in Husserl's writings solid evidence for his rejection of the relational conception of perceptual experience. Here are some typical passages:

It is always quite questionable, and frequently misleading, to say that perceived .... objects 'enter consciousness' [...], or to say conversely that 'consciousness', 'the ego' enters into this or that sort of relation to them, or to say that such objects 'are taken up into consciousness' in this or that way, or to say, similarly, that intentional experiences 'contain something as their object in themselves' etc. etc. Such expressions promote *two misunderstandings*: first, that we are dealing with [...] a real (*reale*) relationship, taking place between 'consciousness' or 'the ego', on the one hand, and the thing of which there is consciousness on the other; secondly that we are dealing with a relation between two things, both present in equally real fashion (*reel*) in consciousness, an act and an intentional object [...]. [...]. If this experience is present, then, *eo ipso*, and through its own essence (we must insist), the intentional 'relation' to an object is achieved, and an object is

‘intentionally present’: these two phrases mean precisely the same. And of course such an experience may be present in consciousness together with its intention, although its object does not exist at all, and is perhaps incapable of existence. ((Husserl, 1970): 98-99)

To perceive a house means to be aware of [...] a bodily present house. Nothing is thereby said about the existence, the true being [...] of the house. ((Husserl, 1973): 15)

It is a serious error to draw a real (reel) distinction between ‘merely immanent’ or ‘intentional’ objects, on the one hand, and ‘transcendent’, ‘actual’ objects, which may correspond to them on the other. [...] It need only be acknowledged that the intentional object of a presentation is the same as its actual object and on occasion as its external object and it is absurd to distinguish between them. This is plainly a merely analytic proposition. (Husserl, 1970): 126-127)

These passages provide evidence for attributing Husserl the following view. First, a perceptual experience does *not depend* on its object: the intentional relation to the object does not presuppose the *existence* of the object. Second, the intentional relation to the object is not reducible to any ‘real’ relation. In the veridical case the object plays a causal role in the production of the experience. It is not, however, the intentional object of the experience by virtue of playing that role. Third, in a perceptual experience (as opposed to an imagination, or a remembering) the object is present *in persona* (*leibhaft*). This is so even in the case of a hallucination. So for an object to be present *in persona* does not mean for the object to exist. Fourth, there is no distinction between the intentional object on the one side and the transcendent, actual object on the other side.

‘Transcendent’ means that the object is presented as external, as independent from the experience. ‘Actual’ means that the object is presented as contemporary to the experience (as opposed to how it appears in acts of remembering). In the veridical case the intentional object is (identical to) the real object.

These claims are in line with Husserl’s notion of simple seeing as it was presented above. If one cannot *simply* see the existence of the apple, then one ought not to be able to infer the existence of the apple from the fact that one sees (has a visual experience of) an apple. But this does not mean that what one simply sees, when the apple exists, is something different from the really existing apple.

## §8

*Direct Realism* about perceptual experiences is a position that includes the claim that perceptual experiences are about mind-independent concrete particulars: their existence does not depend on the subject’s perceptual experience of them. This form of mind-independence is what Husserl means by transcendence. Direct realism has to be distinguished from *Naïve Realism*, which claims, as Martin puts it:

Taking sensory experiences to be events, [...] objects of perception are to be understood as constituents of the event in question. The naïve realist supposes it is an aspect of the

essence of such experiential episodes that they have such experience-independent constituents. ((Martin 2006): 357)

Central to the naïve realist's view is the claim that the relation the experience holds to the object *in the veridical case* is an essential constituent of the experience. If the naïve realist shares the direct realist's claim that the object of perception is an external entity, then the relation to a mind-independent object is an essential constituent of the experience.

Disjunctivism is a position that follows from the conjunction of naïve and direct realism. If the relation the veridical perceptual experience stands to its object constitutes an essential part of its nature, then veridical and non-veridical perceptual experiences must be experiences of a different kind. But veridical perceptual experiences should not be of a different kind simply because they are veridical. There must be something in addition to their veridicality that distinguishes them from non-veridical experiences. One suggestion is that their veridicality is firmly associated to a phenomenal property of the experience. A perceptual experience about a particular object is veridical if and only if the experience (as an event occurring in the stream of consciousness) stands in some specific relation to that object. Suppose that standing in that relation to the object generates, or is associated to, a phenomenal feature of the experience. The presence of the feature itself depends on the relation. It is a relational phenomenal feature of the experience. A disjunctivist typically describes this relational phenomenal feature as a case of *acquaintance* with the external object, or as a form of *direct awareness* of the external object.

An advocate of orthodox intentionalism, such as Husserl, takes intentionality to be a phenomenal feature of perceptual experiences. Being about something (not to be confused with appearing to be about something!) is an essential phenomenal feature of *all* intentional experiences. Having an intentional experience is to have an object in mind, to be aware of an object. In a perceptual experience one is directly aware of an actual and transcendent object. In a veridical perceptual experience one is directly aware of a real object: one is *acquainted* with it. The orthodox intentionalist is not willing to consider intentionality as a feature that is specific to veridical experiences alone. Even in a hallucination one is directly aware of an object. So the notions of direct awareness and acquaintance the intentionalist is willing to apply to veridical perceptual experiences can't be quite the same as those used by the disjunctivist. The disjunctivist uses those notions in order to qualify what is supposed to be a phenomenal specificity of the veridical case; the intentionalist uses them in order to qualify the nature of perceptual experience, whether veridical or not.

For an orthodox intentionalist perceptual experiences are simple, direct relations to objects that are presented in consciousness *in persona*, as transcendent and actual. Perceptual experiences do not have correctness conditions, they are not submitted to normative requirements. They simply are conscious relations to their objects. To visually experience an

object is to be directly visually aware of it. When the object is a really existing denizen of the external world, the perceptual experience delivers an indefeasible warrant for the belief based on it. The subject gains a warrant by being *acquainted* with a really existing external object. In that case the perceptual experience is appropriate. But the experience, and its phenomenal quality, does not depend on the existence of that object.

Let me summarise some of the points made above. On the view under consideration the intentional object of a perceptual experience is presented directly. It is not given as satisfying some descriptive condition. The intentional relation to the object is conscious. One is directly aware of the object; one is acquainted with it. As such the object plays a role in determining the phenomenal properties of the experience. If the object is real, then it plays a causal role with respect to the experience. That causal relation is no part of, and does not ground, the intentional relation. Acquaintance is not the conscious manifestation of the fact that the perceptual experience has been caused by its intentional object. The phenomenal quality of a perceptual perceptual experience does not depend on whether the object is real or not. This does not prevent the subject from having the capacity to be perceptually acquainted with real objects. When this happens, the perceptual experience is suited for delivering an indefeasible warrant for beliefs about the external world.

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