

A Challenge to Externalist Representationalism:

Analysing Georges Rey's Account
and Salvaging his Project

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Abstract

In “A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Content” and *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*, Georges Rey challenges the tradition of combining externalism and representationalism about mental states. Specifically, his challenge takes the form of an internalist representationalist account of states with qualitative content. I examine his account, and find it problematic on the grounds that it fails to appropriately account for the substantiality and determinacy of qualitative content. However, I propose a solution to this problem in the form of an alternative view. This view compromises several aspects of Rey’s view, most importantly in virtue of being a weak externalist position rather than internalist one. Yet, in keeping with Rey’s project, this alternative view challenges the traditional combination of representationalism and externalism. It is a view on which mental states with qualitative contents are only indirectly individuated by elements in the external world. Mental states are not, as on a standard representationalist account, individuated by elements in the external world that they represent. While I conclude that Rey’s view is incorrect, I salvage his project.

Introduction

This thesis explores Georges Rey's internalist representationalist account of states with qualitative content, as presented in his "A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Content" and his *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*. Rey's is an unusual view, combining internalism and representationalism in the cases of perceptual experiences and phenomenal states. This combination of views seems able to satisfy a number of intuitions, especially about perceptual experiences. In this thesis I consider whether Rey's internalism is a viable position given his commitment to representationalism (and given certain other features of his view). While there are advantages to Rey's position, I eventually conclude that his account is not viable as it stands. I offer a new position, a modification of Rey's, which is more satisfactory. This modification provides an alternative to the standard representationalist externalist view, as Rey intends his position to be. In this introduction I discuss the different types of mental states under consideration, introduce internalism and representationalism (and their opposing view points), and explain the significance of Rey's view. I then give an overview of the structure of the thesis and the contents of each chapter.

Before looking at Rey's view it is essential to understand the types of mental states that it concerns. We undergo a number of different types of mental states, about which we have different intuitions. Rey's theory concerns states with qualitative content—perceptual experiences and phenomenal states—and his theory must be understood within the context of a tradition typically concerned with propositional attitudes. I discuss these three types of states in reverse order. First, there are the

propositional attitudes, states such as beliefs, desires, hopes, fears and so forth that have propositions as their contents. Consider my belief that today is Tuesday. When I have this belief I am standing in a believing relation to the proposition that today is Tuesday. Beliefs such as this, as well as other propositional attitudes, appear to be representational, in that they seem to represent the world as being a certain way. These stand in contrast to mental states of a second type, the phenomenal states, which do not appear to have such representational content. While it can be argued otherwise, it seems natural to say that a tickle in one's throat does not represent anything, but simply tickles. The phenomenal states have a content that seems, rather, to consist in a phenomenal feel or qualitative content, meaning that it feels like something to have them. By contrast it is not clear that the propositional attitudes have phenomenal feel. As such the contents of propositional attitudes and phenomenal states seem to be very different. A third group of states, the perceptual experiences, such as my experience as of the redness of a strawberry, appear both to be representational and to have qualitative content. It is like something to experience the redness as of a strawberry, and such an experience seems to represent this redness. (I say "as of" rather than "of" redness, because one could have such an experience in a non-veridical case. One might mistakenly perceive an orange tomato as red; in such a case the experience is as of redness.)

A representationalist about a given type of mental state, say, a perceptual experience, holds that all of the content of a mental state of that type is representational content. Someone who holds the non-representationalist view about a given type of mental state believes that at least some of the content of a state of this

type is not representational. Representationalism is a natural view to hold about propositional attitudes, but unnatural in the case of phenomenal states (as they seem not to have representational content at all) and questionably natural for perceptual experiences.

Not only do we have different intuitions about the different categories of mental states in terms of whether such states have representational content, qualitative content or both, but we also have different intuitions about what individuates each type of state within these categories. Externalism holds that the content a mental state has depends on some elements of the external world to make it the type of content that it is, where “external world” could mean the world beyond an individual’s central nervous system, body or mind (this issue is raised in Chapter 1). In such a case content is said to be “individuation-dependent” on elements of the external world. Content that is individuated this way is “wide” and is said to be individuated “widely”. The contrasting view is internalism, which maintains that the individuation of mental content does not depend on anything in the external world. Depending on the way “external world” is defined, different theorists place different constraints on what constitute elements usable for internalist individuation. Some think internalist individuation can be dependent on any factors from the skin inwards, while others limit the individuating factors to the head or the brain and nervous system—or to factors in the mind. For an internalist, content is said to be “narrow” and is individuated “narrowly”.

In the case of propositional attitudes, at least some of the time it seems natural to say that each propositional attitude has content of the kind it has because of

features of the external environment—i.e. that they are individuation-dependent on such features. One reason for supposing so is that our thoughts and other propositional attitudes seem to be essentially connected to elements of the external world. When I think that water is wet, the kind of thought I have seems to depend somehow on something to do with the presence of water in the world I inhabit. If I have never encountered water and none of my ancestors have (or if there is simply no water in the world I inhabit), it does not seem that I can have a thought that is genuinely about water. This appears true even if I were to have a thought that was otherwise identical to the thought about water I have in the actual world. However, phenomenal states do not seem to be individuation-dependent on the environment in this way. Instead, internalism seems a more plausible view. When I stub my toe on the step this causes me pain. Yet it seems possible that I could be dreaming and the step might not exist, but that my pain could be real and of the same type as if the step were real. It does not seem that what is in the external world actually matters for this pain to feel the way it does, and hence to have the qualitative content it does. The perceptual experiences are a less clear case. One might think that they are narrow or that they are wide. Consider the example of the experience as of the redness of a strawberry. There are reasons to think the contents of a state such as this might be individuated by elements in the external world, in this case, strawberries and redness. Assuming that their contents are representational, their individuation might be dependent on the existence of those things they represent, which suggests that externalism is appropriate for them. However, it seems that they could feel the way they do regardless of any possible changes in the environment. Perhaps one wants to

say that my experience as of the redness of a strawberry is the same type of experience whether or not redness and strawberries are currently present to me, have ever impressed themselves on me in the past, or even exist at all. This would support internalism.

There are a variety of different possibilities of combining representationalism or the non-representationalist view with internalism or externalism, for a given type of mental state. It is standard to combine representationalism with externalism. By contrast, internalism seems to cohere better with the non-representationalist view. If one is a representationalist externalist about some type of mental state, one believes that the content of mental states of that type is determined by some factors in the external environment, and that the content is also representative of something. There are various types of externalist representationalist view, but such positions generally create explicit ties between externalism and representationalism. An externalist usually holds that a mental state will come to have the content it does due to some kind of interaction with the external world. On a simplified view, one could hold that some mental state, X , has content, ϕ , due to interacting causally with ϕ s in the world and that it also represents ϕ s (this the heart of Dretske's and Fodor's views, among many others)¹. This leaves room for a variety of positions that explain representation and individuation in a connected way.

Anyone choosing to hold an internalist view must address the difficult question of what in fact is able to individuate mental states and allows them to have the substantial, determinate content that they have. In terms of individuation

¹See e.g. Dretske, Fred. *Naturalizing the Mind*. MIT Press: 1995, and Fodor, Jerry. *Psychosemantics*, MIT Press: 1987.

conditions, an internalist is limited, on the most permissive view, to the elements found within the body. Depending on the type of internalist, this may be further limited, perhaps as far as to elements within the mind. If the states in question represent something, but represent something in the external world, then the elements represented are not able to play any part in individuation. Yet this is problematic. It seems that representational content must be individuated in a way connected to what is represented in order to qualify as representational content. In the case of perceptual experiences, if they are representational at all, one might think that they represent elements in the external world. The experience as of redness could represent redness, for example. However, on an internalist representationalist view it is hard to see how such a state could come to have that content. Instead, *prima facie*, internalism appears to cohere better with the non-representationalist view (at least given that representation is generally representation of something in the external world). Phenomenal states such as pains and tingles are paradigmatic states for someone advocating an internalist, non-representationalist account. While these considerations do not show that internalism and the non-representationalist view have to be held in conjunction with one another, they do indicate that it makes sense to hold these views in conjunction.

Rey's position combines internalism and representationalism in the case of states with qualitative content. For him, perceptual experiences are the central type of mental state. Here, we have both internalist intuitions and representationalist ones, in each case motivated by arguments and thought experiments. Rey endeavours to show that we can satisfy both sets of intuitions, challenging the traditional connection

between representationalism and externalism. Admittedly, representationalist internalism appears to be an unsatisfying view as far as phenomenal states are concerned, because of the inclination to believe that pains and the like do not actually represent anything at all. However, it is an interesting view because it emphasises the difficult case of perceptual experiences, and yet more so because it presents a possibility beyond that of standard representationalist externalism.

Rey maintains that the individuation of states with qualitative content is in terms of the functional role of these states within our mental processes (i.e. what it is their job to do) and that they represent certain properties, such as reddishness and painfulness. However, his view is novel in that he thinks that the properties that states with qualitative content represent do not in fact exist. As he takes these states to represent phenomenal properties, this makes him an eliminativist about such properties. Whereas the property of redness, a property instantiated in strawberries, blood and other real entities, might exist, the phenomenal property of reddishness, a property concerned with the way it feels to experience redness, does not. States with qualitative content do not obtain their content from the entities that they represent, but rather from the role that they perform. This makes Rey's view dramatically different from that of representationalist externalists. The position captures the intuition that perceptual experiences are about something, which is to say that they have some representational content, while also capturing internalist intuitions concerning them. However, the view achieves this at the expense of capitulating to eliminativism about phenomenal properties.

In Chapter 1, I introduce representationalism and internalism/externalism in greater detail, and present arguments for various views. I note the strengths of arguments for internalism as a position about states with qualitative content. Here I present arguments for and against representationalism; I do not take a stand on this position, but assess Rey's internalism on the supposition that representationalism is true. These various views are introduced with reference to the work of Hilary Putnam, Ned Block and others. I take it that the representationalist aspect of Rey's view is the most fundamental, and this is central to my examination of alternatives and modifications to his view. Chapter 2 presents Rey's view about qualitative content in detail, looking at the arguments for the view and also more closely examining the view as a contrast to the representationalist externalist position. Then, in Chapter 3, I provide the tools necessary for an analysis of Rey's view, exploring alternatives to it. These include: an alternative internalist view, that of Terence Horgan, John Tienson and George Graham ; and several externalist possibilities, in particular weak externalism, as advocated by both Cynthia Macdonald and Colin McGinn. Presenting the weak externalist view provides necessary background to the argument made against Rey in Chapter 4. This chapter argues that, as it stands, Rey's view is unable to account for the determinate and substantial nature of qualitative content. It then considers the possibility of combining some elements of Rey's view (including his representationalism) with weak externalism, into a new position. I conclude that while this is a viable possibility, it only discharges some of the reasons one would wish to be a representationalist internalist. Even so, it does present an alternative to the standard representationalist externalist views.

Chapter 1: Internalism and Representationalism

The position that Georges Rey develops in “A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience” is a type of internalist representationalism. This view, and specifically the viability of holding internalism given representationalism, will be the focus of this thesis. However, before Rey’s position can be explored, internalism and the opposing view, externalism, must first be explicated, as must representationalism. In the present chapter I give motivations for adopting an internalist position, and arguments for and against adopting a representationalist position. This thesis will assess Rey’s internalism given the assumption that representationalism is correct, though I do not argue that it is. I take Rey’s view to be most essentially a representationalist view, hence critique and modifications are addressed primarily to the internalist aspect of his view.

1.1 An Introduction to the Internalism/Externalism Debate

To understand arguments for internalism about states with qualitative content, one must first understand the wider internalism/externalism debate. This section begins with Hilary Putnam’s original twin earth thought experiment, which specifically concerns externalism about linguistic natural kind terms. I show how the claims can be extended to certain mental states as well. Then I begin to demonstrate how the issue involves further mental states.

Putnam started the internalism/externalism debate with his 1975 paper “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”.² He provided a thought experiment that motivates externalism about natural kind terms, terms such as “star”, “dog” or “water”. Let us turn to Putnam’s original experiment. Imagine a world that is phenomenologically identical in every detail to earth (meaning that as far as appearances are concerned it is identical). This planet, call it “twin earth”, is also physically identical to earth in every detail except that wherever there is water on earth, on twin earth there is some other substance, call it “twater”. This substance has all of the same phenomenological properties as water, but it has a complicated molecular formula that we can abbreviate to XYZ. It is tasteless, odourless and colourless, fills the oceans, rivers and lakes, the residents drink it, bathe in it and refer to it with a word that sounds like “water”. The histories and counterfactual states of earth and twin earth are also type-identical. (Entities are type-identical if and only if they are distinct instantiations of the same types, like two forks made on the same assembly line.) On twin earth, I have a twin who is physically and phenomenologically type-identical to me. (Note that this cannot be quite true, of course, since, for every molecule of water I have, she has a molecule of twater. Hereafter I will ignore the awkward fact about the difference between my twin’s body and mine and talk as though our bodies are type-identical. If Putnam had picked another example that did not involve something found in our bodies, such as gold and twin gold, he could have made the externalist claim without such a complication. My twin and I could be physically identical though she is in a world

² Putnam, Hilary. “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”, *Mind, Language and Reality*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press: 1975, pp. 215-71.

containing twin gold rather than gold.) I shall speak as though my twin and I really are physically as well as phenomenologically type-identical.

Suppose my twin and I each utter words which sound as do the earth English words “water is wet”. It seems that despite the physical and phenomenological sameness of my twin and me, the words we utter mean different things. When she says words sounding like “water is wet” it seems that she is talking about the stuff in her environment that she calls “water”, i.e. the *twater* that she has grown up around. Likewise when I use the word that sounds like “water” I seem to be talking about the stuff in my environment, real water. Moreover, it seems that they have different meanings: hers means *twater* and mine means *water*. Because we are type-identical, the difference in the environment is making these meanings different. It seems therefore that we should be externalists about the meanings of natural kind terms. Putnam comes to this conclusion and is consequently an externalist about natural-kind terms (though he does not extend this conclusion to psychological states).

Tyler Burge points out that externalism, which Putnam claims is true about the meanings of natural kind terms, also appears to be true for propositional attitudes whose expression involves natural kind terms.³ This is a natural extension of Putnam’s claims, because, so long as we are being sincere, our use of language expresses our beliefs. When one sincerely makes the claim “water is wet”, one expresses one’s belief. One chooses one’s words because they have the meanings they do, so that what one means (if one is being sincere) is what one believes. In other instances we express hopes, desires, fears and so forth, all of which can be expressed

³ This can be seen in: Burge, Tyler, “Individualism and the Mental”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 4, University of Minnesota Press: 1979, pp. 73-121, and in other of his writings.

with language. It seems that when my twin and I make different claims when using words that sound the same (and are written the same, used syntactically the same way and so forth), that we have different thoughts. Since we are phenomenologically and physically type-identical, this shows that some element of the environment has an individuating role.

My twin and I can each have a belief that would be expressed by words sounding like “water is wet”. However my twin’s belief is about twater, whereas my belief is about water; a twater-type belief as opposed to a water-type belief. We can see that they are distinct types of beliefs by noting that they are made true by different states of the world, giving them different truth conditions. Her belief expressed by words sounding like “water is wet” is true if and only if twater is wet, whereas my belief that would be expressed with those words is true if and only if water is wet. (This is not to be confused with externalist individuation: that has to do with elements of the external world individuating the type of belief a belief is, whereas here we are merely noting that we can tell that my belief and my twin’s are different because they have different truth conditions.) The experiment does not make clear what precise factors in the environment make for content-individuation, and externalists elaborate on this in a number of different ways, but it does seem to show that something external to the individual must be involved in individuation. Notice that, perhaps counter-intuitively, we can discover something concerning what type of belief we have by investigating elements of the world: we can discover, for example, that my belief and my twin’s are different. It must also be noted that the experiment depends

on intuition in order to work. We must intuit that my thought and my twin's have different contents. However, this intuition seems to be a natural one.

The twin earth example shows how something in the external world, specifically the constitution of water, can be relevant to the individuation of the content of a mental state. However, this raises the interesting question of what actually constitutes internalist versus externalist individuation. This issue evokes the difficult problem of identifying the line that demarcates self from external world: the internalism/externalism concern is about whether what matters for my mental states to be the ones they are is something within me, or something external to me. Various possibilities exist. One might be to limit internalist individuation to individuation in terms of elements within the brain, perhaps working on the intuition that my brain is where my mental states are located (or on the theory that I am my brain, and everything else is external to me). However, it may seem to be difficult and also arbitrary to distinguish between the brain and other elements of the central nervous system. Rey's position is that internalist individuation can involve the brain and central nervous system.⁴ However, again there is a somewhat hazy line between the central nervous system and other elements of the body: one could hold that anything within an individual's body is available to internalist individuation. However, one can also argue for a much stricter understanding of internalism. When one has, say, a thought about one's toe, this involves two entities, the thinker and the toe. This suggests that thoughts about one's toes should be considered externalistically individuated. Along this line of reasoning, one might be tempted to say that

⁴ Rey, Georges, "A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience," *Nous*, Vol. 32, Supplement: Language Mind and Ontology (1998): 435-457, p. 436.

internalism involves individuation only by entities within the mind (given some suitable definition of the mind). The issue of more precisely delineating between what constitutes the internal as opposed to the external is complicated, and I do not intend to enter debate on the subject. The following is intended to apply regardless of whether one understands the stance of internalism in relation to the brain alone, the body as a whole, or perhaps the mind alone.

The twin earth example as presented above is specific to propositional attitudes whose expression involves terms for natural kinds. However, one can be an externalist about various different types of mental states. Rey's view is specifically an internalism about states with qualitative content, and I will turn to the issue of the individuation of such states in Section 1.2. Before this it should be noted that one can be an externalist about other kinds of propositional attitudes, not merely ones expressed using natural kind terms. Burge gives some alternative thought experiments designed to demonstrate externalism about socially defined terms such as "arthritis" and "contract", and the propositional attitudes that are expressed by using them.⁵

In Burge's arthritis thought experiment, we are to imagine a man on earth who suffers from the arthritis condition (where the term "arthritis" is used by the community of speakers to which he belongs to refer to a disease that involves inflammation of the joints only). When he suffers from an inflammation of his thigh muscle he believes that his arthritis has spread to his thigh. Now imagine the phenomenological and physical twin of this man in a world very much like our own. The only differences are that on this twin planet the word sounding like "arthritis" is

⁵ Burge, pp. 77-82.

used to refer to inflammations of the muscles as well as the joints, and all the differences that follow from this ensue, such as differences in the entries in dictionaries and doctors making different diagnoses. However, the man and his twin have had phenomenologically identical experiences; they have never read the definition of the words sounding like “arthritis” or heard one from a doctor, and so forth. Burge argues that when the man and his twin both hold a belief that would be expressed with words sounding like “I have arthritis in my thigh”, they have beliefs of different types. The earth man has an arthritis type belief and his twin has a twin-arthritis type belief.⁶ This fits with the intuition that the earth man is wrong about having arthritis in his thigh, while his twin is right about having in his own thigh what he describes with the identical-sounding word, even though the physical conditions of the two men are type-identical. (Note that there is a necessary assumption here that the term sounding like “arthritis” picks out a category of ailments that one could put different membership requirements on, making it a socially defined term.)

Before turning to the case of states with qualitative content, and arguments for internalism about them, it should be pointed out that there are many different ways to be internalist or externalist. For example, there are a number of possibilities as to what individuates different mental states. In the case of internalism these include the functional role of a state and phenomenal properties (understood as properties of mental states). In the case of externalism they include such possibilities as what a mental state has standardly referred to and what it is the evolutionary role of the state to refer to. There are also different strengths of externalist view. One can be a

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

“strong” externalist or a “weak” externalist of some type. A strong externalist holds that states must be individuated directly with regard to elements in an individual’s actual environment. A weak externalist may hold that the individuation of such a state must merely be dependent on elements in the environment. Weak externalists can claim that states with narrow content exist. However, the existence of these states actually requires the existence of other states that do get their content from the external world. Weak externalism will become important as it presents a compromise I argue could save Rey’s position from other problems. Weak externalism will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3 and in addressing Rey’s position in Chapter 4.

1.2 Arguments for Internalism

The mental content version of Putnam’s twin earth thought experiment makes a relatively convincing case for externalism in the case of the propositional attitudes, at least for those involving natural kind concepts. More work needs to be done if the conclusion is to be extended to perceptual experiences and phenomenal states. Ned Block’s inverted earth case shows how a parallel case for perceptual experiences would run.⁷ Imagine a twin earth that is type-identical to our own, except that the colours are inverted. There the grass is red, the sky is yellow and the sun is blue. The language is also inverted, so the inhabitants use the word “green” to describe their grass, despite the fact that their grass is red. As on twin earth, on inverted earth I have a twin. For the experiment to work, it must not be possible for my twin on inverted earth to tell with the naked eye that the colours are inverted relative to those on earth.

⁷ Block, Ned. “Inverted Earth,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 4, Action Theory and Philosophy of Mind (1990), pp. 53-79, circa p. 60.

Imagine that, unbeknownst to her, my twin on twin earth was affixed at birth with lenses that invert the light that hits her retinas. If she were to look at earth grass red light would reach her retinas, and when she looks at inverted earth grass green light reaches her retinas.

Here we must ask whether my twin has experiences as of redness when looking at inverted earth grass, or as of greenness. (Note the use of the phrase “as of x” rather than merely “of x”. Whereas my twin has an “experience of redness” when looking at red grass, because it is caused by looking at red grass, it is an open question what the content of the experience is, hence what the experience is “as of”.) If my twin has an experience as of greenness she and I have the same type of perceptual state. However, if she has an experience as of redness we have different ones despite the fact that all of our mental states, perceptual states, and other states to do with colour processing, are physically and phenomenologically the same. Despite the fact that my twin and I are not completely identical, because she alone has inverting lenses, this latter case motivates externalism. Most people have the intuition that we have mental states of the same type: she has an experience as of the greenness of grass, one that feels greenish and is for all purposes the same as the state that I am in when I look at grass. The internalist position is clearly consistent with this outcome. An internalist maintains that the factors that individuate the content of mental states are within the body or some restricted part of it. Thus, the differences in our respective external environments make no individuating difference to the contents of our mental states. Because we are the same from the retina inwards we have mental states with the same type of content. The intuition seems to be that in cases where the

way something appears is different from the way it is, the content of a state with a phenomenal feel ought to be aligned with how it feels. Thus we intuit that whatever the individuation of states with qualitative content depends on is internal to us—and clearly this is an *internalist* intuition. The external environment is causally relevant to what kind of states we have. However, the external environment does not seem to be individually relevant. (Causally speaking, my twin could not have an experience as of greenness if it were not for the red grass and inverting lenses. However, the experiment shows that appearance can come apart from reality in the case of something experienced, and that in such a case it seems *prima facie* that the external environment is not relevant to the individuation.) Whereas the water twin earth experiment appears to support externalism about propositional attitudes, the inverted earth experiment appears to support internalism about perceptual states, at least on first reading. Externalists do have possible responses to the intuition concerning narrow content in the inverted earth case, as Chapter 3 will show. Perhaps externalists will be able to give an adequate error theory for the intuition, but it may turn out to be better to satisfy rather than explain away this intuition.

The inverted earth experiment concerns perceptual experiences and does not concern purely phenomenal states such as pain. It seems hard to imagine that there could be an equivalent thought experiment that uses purely phenomenal states. It does not seem possible to create the kind of divide between appearance and reality needed for such an experiment in the case of a state such as pain. However, one does not need to. Block's thought experiment serves to show that those things in the external world that might be relevant to the individuation of perceptual experiences are in fact

not relevant. In the case of phenomenal states, at least *prima facie*, there do not seem to be any factors in the external world that might be relevant to individuation. Ticks do not seem to be individuated by feathers, or pains by thumb tacks. (It is possible to argue that they are individuated by certain states of the body, and as we have seen, on some definitions of internalism, this could be a threat. However, such explanations are intuitively implausible. If an individual sincerely claims to be suffering a pain despite having absolutely no bodily damage or other bodily state by which one may wish to individuate pain, I am still inclined to think that such an individual is in pain. Pains in phantom limbs may turn out to be viable real world examples of such a phenomenon.) One does not need an intuition pump in the form of a thought experiment to have an internalist intuition about these states.

I now turn to a further motivation for internalism about perceptual experiences and purely phenomenal states. There has been considerable debate about whether our perceptual experiences and purely phenomenal states are transparent, meaning that we cannot introspect anything about experience but merely “see through” our experiences to the objects and properties of things in the world.⁸ When I attempt to introspect the experience as of a round, red tomato, I draw my attention to roundness and redness, but these are properties of the tomato. However, I may also be able note blurriness, visualness, reddishness or other property that is actually of the experience. If perceptual experiences are not transparent, and prove to have some introspectable content that does not merely present elements of the external world, then this content

⁸ See for example Block, Ned. “Mental Paint and Mental Latex,” in E. Villanueva (ed.), *Perception, Philosophical Issues 7*, Ridgeview: 1996, and Tye, Michael. “The Function of Consciousness”, *Nous*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (1996): 287-305.

is a natural candidate for internalist content. Transparent mental states with content merely representing elements of the external world can feasibly be individuated with reference to what they represent. However, content that is not transparent may be better suited to internalist individuation. Phenomenal states, assuming that they are not representational, are not transparent, as the content they have is introspectable. However, the case of perceptual experiences requires argument.

Rey produces a thought experiment designed to show that perceptual experiences are not transparent.⁹ Imagine a man who is colour blind but has somehow developed a means of identifying green objects, perhaps by tracking surface reflectance. (It need not be the case that greenness reduces to a certain surface reflectance, but for this thought experiment to work greenness must covary with a certain surface reflectance.) This man is then given an operation that allows him to perceive colours normally. Both before and after the operation he is able to attend to the greenness of the plants around him. He may even want to say that he cannot introspect his experience and that the properties he sees are properties of things in the world. However, he can presumably introspect a difference between his previous experience of the world and his current experience, after the operation. The man before the operation is able to perceive that things are green and even have experiences of green things. Then after the operation, he is able to introspect a “greenishness” in the experience. In this case, even if the environment of the colour blind person remains the same, it seems that the content of his experiences will be

⁹ Rey, 1998, p. 441.

different from what it was before, which indicates the existence of some narrow content.

There are a number of possible responses to these motivations for internalism about perceptual experiences and phenomenal states, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Firstly, notice that the inverted earth thought experiment and the argument from transparency both depend on intuition. Secondly, notice also that the motivations given here for accepting that perceptual experience has at least some narrow content all concern the case of colour perception; we will examine whether this gives us reason to think that there is narrow content in all cases of perceptual experience, for example that of shapes or textures or temperatures. However, while there are a number of issues left to discuss, it seems that the inverted earth and transparency arguments reveal a strong intuition in favour of internalism. This demonstrates the desirability of an internalist view. However, to fully understand Rey's project we must turn to the motivations for representationalism.

1.3 Arguments for Representationalism

The representationalist view is committed to two things: first, that our mental states represent something, such as a state of the world, object or property; and second, and more contentiously, especially in the case of perceptual experiences and phenomenal states, that all of the content of a mental state is representational content. I will look briefly at what it means for the representationalist position to be true of a mental state, and then at the arguments available to a representationalist about perceptual experiences and phenomenal states. These concern both support for the

claim that these have representational content at all, and that all of their content is representational.

Representational content is content that is about or refers to something. A representation exists when there are regular correlations between some entity and some other entity that it stands for. The word “cat” represents cats and stands for cats in our language. Instead of having to find and point to cats when we need to talk about them we can simply use the word “cat”. Just as words have reference, i.e. what they pick out, mental representations have contents, which is what they pick out. Like the reference of the word “cat” is cat, the content of an experience as of greenness could arguably be greenness. Moreover, just as when we use the word “cat” wrongly it actually still nonetheless refers to cats (e.g. in the phrase “Harry Potter is a cat”), when we have non-veridical experiences they can have the same content as veridical ones. Consider a scenario in which I am having a veridical experience of a brown cup. A representationalist will say that I have an experience that represents the cup and the brownness, and that the represented brownness is a represented property of the represented cup. Moreover, the same will be said of the case of non-veridical representation. Imagine that I am in fact hallucinating. There is no actual cup, but the representation still exists and the “brownishness” of my experience is still a represented property of the represented cup. In this case convention dictates that we refer to the cup as an “intentional inexistent”: it is that thing which the experience is about though it does not actually exist.

In the case of perceptual experiences, it is easy to argue for some representational content. These states simply seem to be about something. Holding

that such states are representational has a number of advantages. Perceptual experiences are sometimes veridical and sometimes non-veridical: that we are sometimes correct about what we take ourselves to be perceiving, and sometimes incorrect. This is easily explained in terms of these perceptual experiences sometimes being accurate representations and sometimes being inaccurate ones. We also think that perceptual experiences serve to give us information about the external world. It seems that my experience as of redness, if it is a veridical one, gives information about elements present in my environment. This makes sense in the context of our mental states representing these elements. (However, as I will explain in Chapter 2, Rey does not take them to be representations of anything in the external environment. Nonetheless, abstracted from Rey's view, this is a substantial reason to think that perceptual experiences are representational.)

It is much harder to argue that phenomenal states are representational. Consider a claim difficult for a representationalist to make plausible: the claim that pain represents. Representationalists can claim that pain represents bodily damage. If this is the case, this representation nonetheless seems very different from the representation of the propositional attitude expressed as "I have bodily damage". As Ned Block points out, one's own pain is phenomenally impressive, and has a sense of urgency to it.¹⁰ When one is in enough pain it can be very hard to ignore, and tends to shape one's immediate actions. This does not show that pain lacks any representational content, or even that it fails to be exhausted by its representational content. However, as a characterization of a pain, maintaining that it represents bodily

¹⁰ Block, 1996, p. 31.

damage seems to ignore everything that matters, phenomenally speaking. This is an intuition-based argument against the idea that phenomenal content reduces to representational content.

However, there are some reasons to think that phenomenal states are representational. A representationalist view provides a fairly promising way to explain the origins of qualitative content without admitting the existence of some kind of non-physical, phenomenal properties. (Non-physical phenomenal properties are notoriously hard to naturalise, and many philosophers are unwilling to include them in their ontologies, for good reason.) A natural understanding is that a state of pain is painful in virtue of having some property of painfulness. However, an account can be given that does not include a problematic property of this type. From the representationalist stance, phenomenal states can have the content they do because of what they represent, rather than because of any phenomenal properties that they might have. The representationalist strategy reduces qualitative content to representational content. Phenomenal states would simply be a different type of representation of real entities, be they within one's body or mind, or in the external world. It may not seem plausible to reduce qualitative content to representational content. As mentioned above, pain does not seem to represent anything, let alone reduce to a mere representation. Yet this possibility might be able to answer the question of what qualitative content is without requiring recourse to distinct, non-physical phenomenal properties. However, this motivation is only viable within the context of an acceptable theory of content: rather than having to contend with potentially problematic phenomenal properties, one would instead have to give an

explanation of how an account of phenomenal content could explain the nature of states such as pain. As I will show in Chapter 4, this proves to be a major obstacle for Rey.

Another way to argue for representationalism about all states, including phenomenal states, is to argue that to be a mental state simply is to be a representational state. As Brentano famously maintained, intentionality (or aboutness, which in essence equates to representation) is the mark of the mental.¹¹ Viewing the mental as being entirely representational helps when one is attempting to give a unified account of the mind. Our different types of mental states interact with one another not just causally, but in terms of content. Beliefs and desires seem to have representational content, and their interactions with other states can naturally be understood in terms of other states also having representational content. If, for example, I have a phenomenal state of pain, this can lead me to have the belief that I have been hurt. This occurrence is most easily explained if my phenomenal state of pain actually represents something to do with my being hurt. While this is not a definitive argument for representationalism, it is a motivating factor.

A final motivation for representationalism arises out of the transparency issue, which was discussed in Section 1.2 on arguments for internalism. If it turns out that representational states are in fact transparent, then one is hard pressed to argue that they have any non-representational content. One can argue for transparency by appealing to introspection of mental states. As seen in the previous section, there is a certain plausibility to such an argument. When one is experiencing a buttercup and

¹¹ Rey, 1998, p. 438 or see Brentano himself: Brentano, Franz. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, transl. by A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell, and L. McAlister, Routledge: 1973.

one attempts to introspect the experience, it seems that one is able to notice a number of properties about the buttercup but nothing else. Yellowness, shininess and a certain shape all seem to be properties of the buttercup, and it is hard to see what might in fact be a property of the experience. This seems to indicate that the content of the mental state is merely representational content, representing elements perceived. However, this is not an argument to which Rey can appeal. It is possible to argue against such a theory, and Rey chooses to do so with his thought experiment concerning the colour-blind patient. He would maintain that as well as the yellowness of the buttercup, there seems to be another property, namely the yellowishness of the experience. Rey uses this thought experiment to show that there is content that does not represent anything *in the external world*. As the next chapter will make clear, he believes that all content is representational, though states with qualitative content in fact represent such properties as yellowishness, though for him such properties are actually fictitious.

It is worth noting at least one reason one might want to reject representationalism, and even want to reject the view that states with qualitative content represent at all. Because of the limited length of this thesis, it can only focus on some of the aspects of Rey's position. Specifically, it focuses on internalism, rather than representationalism. However, it is by no means clear that representationalism about phenomenal states and perceptual experiences is correct. William Alston, for example, identifies several reasons why one might reject representationalism in the cases of phenomenal states and perceptual experiences (before they become concept laden; for example, the visual experience as it hit the

eyes rather than one's experience as of a cat after some conceptualisation occurs).¹² Alston first challenges the idea that these have a representational function. He holds the plausible view that providing information to the propositional attitude system is one of the key functions of qualitative experience, if not the sole function. Many representationalists also believe this, and Alston argues that the need to accommodate this function is a reason that leads Dretske, Tye and Lycan to a representationalist position.¹³ However, one need not commit to representationalism to ensure this. Alston points out that information can be carried where there is no representation, such as smoke carrying the information that there is fire without actually representing it. He says that if mental states such as phenomenal states and perceptual experiences were representational, they would be like fifth wheels: propositional attitudes already perform that function.¹⁴ (Admittedly, on Dretske's account, carrying information is the basis of representation. However, this is not a problem for Alston because Dretske does not think that carrying information is sufficient for representation.)

The above considerations provide considerable but not definitive motivation for representationalism about perceptual experiences and phenomenal states. It is intuitive to think that perceptual experiences have some representational content, however the case of phenomenal states can be difficult to argue for and one might not think that the content of either of these types of states is entirely representational content. Yet representationalism can be used to explain the nature of qualitative content. There are arguments for representationalism from transparency, an argument

¹² Alston, William. "Perception and Representation", *Philosophy and*

Phenomenological Research Vol. 70, No. 2 (2005): 253-289.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

that representation is the mark of the mental, and an apparent link between representation and veridicality. These provide a basis for accepting that all mental content is representational content, thereby accepting representationalism. The current project is to assess whether Rey successfully reconciles internalism with his core representationalist position, and hence internalism rather than representationalism provides the focus of this thesis.

Conclusion

With the advantages of internalism and representationalism explored, it remains to be seen how Rey is able to argue for a position combining the two views. Both internalism and representationalism have certain advantages, despite the fact that both positions can be contested. We will look further at the issues concerning internalism in Chapter 3, in preparation for identifying problems with Rey's account and proposing an alternative in Chapter 4. Yet there is enough motivation for each of these views to make evident the worth of exploring Rey's suggested combination of them. The following chapter will present Rey's view in detail.

Chapter 2: Rey's Position

For Rey, both perceptual experiences and phenomenal states have narrow representational content. This is an unusual view that diverges greatly from the type of representationalism held by many externalists. The externalist representationalists maintain that a state is individuated with respect to elements in the external world that it represents. Yet Rey maintains that states with qualitative content appear to represent phenomenal properties, but that these properties do not in fact exist (making him an eliminativist representationalist). Because of this, Rey cannot hold that content arises out of what is individuated, as the representational externalists do. Rey, in fact, maintains that a state is individuated relative to its functional role. In order to make sense of this, I will first turn to an analogy with states involving indexicals, which Rey uses to show the viability of narrow representational content. Then I will briefly discuss the way in which externalism and representationalism fit together, before turning to Rey's attempt to fit internalism to his representationalist view instead. I will then present Rey's view in detail, discussing the eliminativist aspect of his view first and then his position generally.

2.1 An Introductory Analogy

One significant consideration that motivates Rey to think that narrow representationalism is possible involves an analogy between his narrow representationalism and a certain view of how we should understand mental states involving indexicality. For mental states with qualitative content, Rey takes both internalism and representationalism to be well motivated. He holds that since it is

desirable to hold each of these positions independently of one another, if it is possible and not problematic to hold both, then this will also be desirable—i.e. it is desirable to be a narrow content representationalist about states with qualitative content. Rey attempts to show that narrow representationalism is possible via an analogy with another case, that of certain indexical thoughts: thoughts which are expressed using indexicals, pointers such as “I” and “now”.¹⁵ It seems fairly intuitive that my thoughts that would be expressed using the indexical “I” actually represent me, and that thoughts that use “now” represent the current time. As will become clear below, there are also a number of reasons for believing that thoughts expressed using such indexicals have narrow content.

Let us look at the so-called “subjective ‘I’ thoughts” (which can also be called ‘*de se* thoughts’). These are thoughts about oneself that present oneself to oneself *as* oneself. Consider the following case. If one comes in with arm loads of groceries, leaves the door open and forgets altogether about it, one could easily walk by later and think that somebody left the door open. This thought is about oneself, but it is not a subjective “I” thought because one does not realize that it is about oneself. Imagine that this person suddenly remembers having left the door open. That person can now think a thought such as “oh, *I* left the door open”. This thought has roughly the content “somebody left the door open, *and it was me*”. Thoughts with this additional aspect are subjective “I” thoughts. It is the “being about me” aspect of subjective “I” thoughts that Rey takes to be the narrow aspect of the thought. He believes it does not matter who has the thought, and that for any speaker capable of it in any environment

¹⁵ Rey, 1998, p. 446.

this content will be the same. This view satisfies our intuition that there is a sense in which you and I have the same type of thought when we each think “I left the door open”, despite the fact our thoughts pick out different people.

Rey attempts to provide support for the view that indexical thoughts have narrow content by arguing that narrow content is needed for certain psychological generalisations. Essentially, he argues that there is a narrow functional role for these states involving indexicality: these states perform a function that can be characterised in a narrow way. As we will explore more fully below, for Rey narrow content states depend for their individuation on their functional role. Explaining impulsiveness or selfishness requires the use of the narrow aspect of certain indexicals. If I am selfish I take resources for Alexandra McKubre, not because of who she is, but because she is me. Other people can be selfish and those people are doing the same type of thing as I am, even though they are taking goods for themselves, rather than for me. This indicates to Rey that the aspect of the indexical that matters in a generalisation such as “selfish people take things for themselves (*ceteris paribus*)” is the narrow aspect. The subjective “I” means something in such a generalisation regardless of who the “I” in question happens to be. For another example, and to see the narrow aspect of another type of indexical, consider the case of impulsiveness. A person acting impulsively is acting on the belief that might best be expressed “sooner is better than later”. Here the indexicals “sooner” and “later” pick out times in the future, sooner being closer to now and later being further from it, whenever now happens to be. The current time is irrelevant. To make this out we use the narrow aspect of the indexical.

2.2 Externalist Representationalism

Rey's view can be seen as an attempt to escape from the apparent conflict between internalism and representationalism. To see why these positions seem to be in opposition to each other we will need to turn briefly to other, more standard varieties of representationalism. As a sample case we will look at Tye's view, which is a type of representationalism that fits cohesively with externalism and conflicts with internalism. Recall that transparency can be used to argue for representation. It forms a part of the standard representationalist externalist picture. Tye's view that an entire state is representational can be attributed to his views about transparency. Someone who holds this type of representationalism is predisposed to adopt an externalist rather than an internalist view. Externalism gives a natural explanation as to how representations come to represent, giving one reason to hold externalism and representationalism in conjunction.

Unlike Rey, Tye believes that our experiences are transparent, allowing us to "look through them" to the actual elements of the world that they represent.¹⁶ Rey thinks that we are able to introspect our experience and apparently perceive additional, qualitative aspects of this experience that do not simply portray elements of the external world. Tye, on the other hand, believes that when we look at, say, a red tomato in the world and attempt to introspect this experience, everything we are able to note about this experience actually represents elements of the world. However,

¹⁶ Tye, Michael. "Representationalist Theories of Consciousness," forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, ed. by B. McLaughlin and A. Beckermann, Oxford University Press. Accessed via <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/philosophy/faculty/tye/RepresentationalistTheoriesOfConsciousness.pdf>> See especially circa p. 7.

there are certain possible counter-examples to the transparency hypothesis, including blurriness of visual experience, the visualness of visual experience and other such sense-modality properties, and the thought experiment about the colour-blind patient used by Rey.

Tye's views on transparency help to ground a simple account of representation and content individuation. In essence, the content of representational states comes from those elements in the world that are represented, as every element of the content of a representation actually corresponds to something in the world. This creates explicit ties between externalism and representationalism. An externalist usually holds that a mental state will come to have the content it does due to some kind of interaction or connection with the external world. One could hold that some mental state X has content ϕ due to interacting causally with ϕ s in the world and that it also represents ϕ s. Further, one could hold that the mental state represents ϕ s precisely because it interacts causally with them. This is the basis of Dretske's and Fodor's views, among others.¹⁷ As we will see in Chapter 3, there are a variety of types of externalism, and some vary considerably from the one just described. However, they operate on the same basic principle: what mental states represent and the means by which they are individuated are closely related, or even identical. It is advantageous for Tye to be an externalist because of the explanation it gives for how states come to represent those things they represent.

Where externalism provides support for and makes sense of the representationalist position, internalism appears to do the opposite, causing problems

¹⁷ See e.g. Fodor, 1987 and Dretske, 1995.

for such a view. If the environment makes no individuating difference to my mental state, then this mental state does not seem to be the right type of state to have the power to represent the external world. However, this does not mean that narrow mental states cannot have any representational content. In particular it is clear that one could have states whose contents represented something within the mind. Yet most representationalists would like to be able to claim that we have mental states, perceptual experiences in particular, that represent elements of the external world. There is a difficult question concerning how mental states could come to represent elements in the external environment when nothing in the external environment is relevant to making them the types of states that they are. It appears, on first analysis, that externalism fits naturally with representationalism, while internalism does not. Thus Rey seems to face a difficult task to make his narrow representationalism plausible. As we will see below, Rey takes perceptual experiences to represent phenomenal properties (which he does not take to be properties of the external world, or even to exist at all). Thus for Rey, over against Tye, perceptual experiences are representational, yet represent nothing real in the external world.

2.3 Eliminativism

Rey's account is unlike that of the representationalist externalists. He is committed to representationalism, for reasons such as those given in Section 1.3. However, the view becomes less natural and much less conventional when combined with internalism. Adopting internalism leads Rey to hold the position that states with qualitative content do not represent anything in the external world. In fact, Rey adopts

an even stronger position. Specifically, he holds that the content of states with qualitative content actually does not represent anything real at all. Given this, Rey has to provide an explanation for how that content comes to be the content it is without involving anything being represented.

One possible option for an internalist representationalist is to maintain that states with qualitative content are individuated by what they represent—not elements of the external world, but elements of the body or the mind. This is not the option that Rey chooses. On such an account states with qualitative content could represent phenomenal properties, where these properties are properties of brain or mental states. Instead of claiming that the experience as of redness represents redness, one could instead claim that this experience represents reddishness. In fact, adopting such an approach coheres well with the inverted earth thought experiment and other motivations for internalism. It is helpful to maintain that the representational content of the experience as of redness is not actually redness. After all, according to an internalist, the content of the experience and the actual redness in the world can become disjoint from one another, not merely in one-off cases of misperception, but systematically so. This can be taken to demonstrate that experiences are concerned with certain phenomenal feelings, rather than with properties in the external world.

Rey argues that states with qualitative content do represent phenomenal properties. However, he also argues that these properties do not exist, and thus that states with qualitative content do not represent anything real. In Rey's words, "while experience *seems* and maybe even *purports* to refer to certain phenomenal objects and

properties, it doesn't actually succeed in doing so."¹⁸ For Rey, there are no phenomenal properties such as reddishness or painfulness. While states with qualitative content are representational, the represented elements are merely intentional properties. To quote Rey again, "[i]nstead of being special properties of the representation, they are simply properties of what the representation purports to represent."¹⁹ As such, on Rey's account, narrow content is representational, but does not represent anything real, even internal to the body.

Prima facie, this eliminativism is counter-intuitive. It seems outrageous to suggest to someone in pain that his or her pain does not have some property of painfulness, or that there is no reddish property to an experience as of redness. It seems obvious that pains are painful, but it is difficult to see how this sentence could be true if there is no such property as painfulness. However, Rey is able to employ an analogy to render this more plausible, specifically one concerned with viewing a Mickey Mouse movie.

Rey holds that our states can have just as much significance for us irrespective of whether they actually represent anything real or not. Imagine an individual who has never before seen a movie (or even heard of one), who is faced with a Mickey Mouse film.²⁰ Rey holds that regardless of whether the images of Mickey Mouse actually represent anything, the action on the screen and the emotions of the characters have significance for the viewer. He speaks of how the viewer will think that Mickey is real, and may attempt to follow him as he moves off screen and so

¹⁸ Rey, Georges. *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind: A Contentiously Classical Approach*, Blackwell: 1997, p. 288.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

forth.²¹ Within the context of the movie these things make sense, even though Mickey Mouse does not exist. Likewise, within the context of our mental states, a state with narrow qualitative content has significance. These states are representational, but do not represent anything real: phenomenal properties are merely represented properties. Moreover, Rey's eliminativism has another advantage. Being an eliminativist saves Rey from the difficult problem of naturalizing phenomenal properties. As Rey comments, eliminativism prevents "treating phenomenal properties as some sort of real properties possessed by either queer things in some dualistic world or by physical things in some queer way".²²

Despite the unusual nature of a representationalist position where nothing real is represented, even on such a view there are significant motivations to be a representationalist. As alluded to in Section 1.3, Brentano's thesis offers one motivation for thinking that these narrow mental states do have representational content. This thesis, to which Rey is committed, asserts that the mind is an intentional organ: mental states *are* states that are representational. *All* of our mental states are one and the same sort of thing, namely representations. Mental states, whether or not there is anything that they represent, are the type of things that have representational content.²³ However, Rey cannot simply point out that mental states are *all* representations. This is insufficient to show that what he calls narrow representational states truly have what is required to be representations: he must show

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 301.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

how they come to have content. Section 2.4 presents Rey's position about the individuation of these states with qualitative content.

2.4 Rey's Account

In externalist representationalist cases, the content individuation of states with qualitative content can be in terms of the represented entity. The same can be true in an internalist representationalist case where states with qualitative content represent phenomenal properties instantiated in the mind or brain. However, Rey must give a different account due to his eliminativist position. He opts for an account based on the narrow functional role of a state: what it is this state's job to do within out mental processes. This functional role is comprised of two aspects, syntax (the structural aspect) and semantics (the meaning aspect). For Rey, the syntax of a mental state is composed of the relations between this state and others, i.e. the states that are apt to cause this state and the states it is apt to cause. On the other hand, the semantics of a mental state involves what the state represents. The semantics of a mental state, like the syntax, depends on the states that are apt to hold causal relations to it, specifically on the contents of these states. This will be explained below.

Rey subscribes to the language-of-thought (LOT) hypothesis, within the context of which his view can be explained more fully.²⁴ The LOT hypothesis asserts that our thoughts (and other states with representational content, thus for Rey, all mental states) take place in a mental language or "language of thought". The syntax of this language is realised in the physical structure of our brains. Essentially, the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, circa p. 208.

theory explains how meaningful, representational mental states can take part in physical causal processes. Like predicates in natural language, predicates in the LOT have both structure and meaning: syntax and semantics. The syntactic units of the LOT are actually physical elements of the brain organised in accordance with certain syntactic rules. The example of computer programming shows how complex processing can occur based on the manipulation of syntactical elements. Running programs to do the myriad of tasks computers can perform merely amounts to manipulating long strings of ones and zeros: manipulating symbols. Yet mental states are more than mere symbol manipulation. They also have a meaning, namely their content: thus they have a semantics. On a representationalist account, this semantics is the representational content of these states, such as the representational content *reddishness* in the case of an experience as of redness.

Rey's view can be called a "functional role" or "functionalist" account of individuation because he individuates mental states based on the functional role that they perform, or what it is their job to do in the language of thought. This must be explored first on a syntactic level, and then on a semantic one. When explaining this, Rey speaks of sentences, predicates and predication in the LOT, rather than mental states. This terminology abstracts away from mental states as implemented in the human brain, and instead captures the "language" that allows them to be realized.²⁵ (The account emphasises the importance of structure and meaning over specific instantiations, such as in the brain.) Distinct predications in the LOT have different characteristic processing, which give them their syntactic functional role. Rey takes

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 210.

sensory predications, such as the one corresponding to the experience as of redness, to be a type of objectless predication, restricted in certain ways. He gives them the structure “It(R)s”, comparing them to objectless predications in natural language, such as “It rains”.²⁶ They are not, after all, predications about any specific object, but mere experiences, such as the experience as of redness. They will have certain proximal stimulus conditions, and will consequently lead to certain other characteristic processing. We will come to have a specific syntactic state given certain situations in our sensory processing systems: Rey notes that “visual predications are apparently marked for hue, lightness, saturation. . .”, and pains for intensity and location in the body.²⁷ When in this state we will make other sensory predications, for example of warm-colouredness, and we will even suffer aversion in the case of pain. These processes are essential to a state having the content it has. They help to make a state an experience as of redness or otherwise, and are thus factors that cause it to be individuated the way that it is.

However, syntax alone is insufficient for a representation. As is clear in the case of natural language, unless words and combinations of them actually mean something, syntactically well-formed combinations of them are merely strings of symbols representing nothing. As such, semantics must be accounted for. Whereas externalists will say that these syntactic elements are able to be meaningful and contentful due to certain relations to the external world, Rey has to give a different account. He notes that “[his account] does raise what can seem like a surprising issue about the *semantics* of experience—if experience involves referential devices, what

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

do they refer to?”²⁸ Yet Rey’s specific, fictionalist breed of eliminativism may be able to provide an answer to this question. He claims that in addition to the syntax of state with qualitative content, there is a meaning relation, hence there is semantic content. Yet these states do not succeed in representing real properties. They purport to represent real properties, but in fact only represent fictional ones. However, the states to which states with qualitative content are apt to bear causal relations fix the representation content of these states.

Thus, he says, “a sensory experience of type F consists of the processing peculiar to an S-restricted predicate, ϕ , that means [F]”²⁹. This claim needs some elucidation. In saying that the predicate in the LOT must be S-restricted, Rey merely means that this predicate has certain proximal stimulus conditions, certain characteristic processing and so forth, essentially a certain syntactic-functional role, as discussed above. The key question with regard to understanding the nature of representational content is how it is able to have meaning, to “mean [F]”.

It is possible for a specific state with qualitative content to have the type of content it does because of the relations it is apt to hold with other states: the states that in general cause this state and are caused by it. As was stated previously, on the syntactic level, the function of a state with qualitative content is given by the relations it holds to these states. On the semantic level, the functional role of a state is representing whatever it represents. The semantics of a state with qualitative content is possible because of the content of the states to which it is apt to bear these causal relations. Rey claims that “a red sensory experience would involve comp-avowing a

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

restricted predication “It(R)s,” as a result of the stimulation of predominantly “red” (or, more exactly, L-wave) sensitive cones, a comp-avowal that. . . could normally occur only in this way. It is the latter that makes it. . . a red experience”.³⁰ “Comp-avowing” a predication refers to having the computational (syntactic-functional) structure to avow to this predication; meaning, in the case of “It(R)s”, that there is a level on which one could sincerely assert that “It(R)s”.³¹ Essentially, Rey is claiming that one has a red sensory experience if one is willing to say something along the lines of “it reds” or (in more understandable English, but less accurately) “something in the world seems red to me”, and that one is willing to say this *because* of stimulation of “red” sensitive cones. The word “say” should not be taken too literally; infants, non-verbal adults and so forth can comp-avow to predicates. Rey here is claiming that the experience as of redness has the content it does because of relations it bears to other mental states and the contents they have. Specifically, this experience is the one it is because it is normally caused by states involved with perceiving redness, states of the retina.

To summarise, Rey maintains that states with qualitative content are individuated by their functional role. Functional role is comprised of two aspects, a syntactic and a semantic aspect. Syntactically speaking, the functional role of a state with qualitative content is given by the causal relations it holds with the states that are apt to cause it and the states that it is apt to cause. The semantic functional role of the state in question, and hence the representational content of that state, is given by

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 290 for information on the prefix “comp”, and p. 294 for information on “avowing”.

relations to these same other states and the contents that they have. Thus states have their content in virtue of relations they hold to other states. These other states may or may not themselves need to be individuated widely. However, it seems that the relations held between states can be characterised narrowly. In this, Rey has found a narrow way to individuate states with qualitative content while nonetheless maintaining that they do have representational content.

Returning to a contrast with a typical externalist representationalist account, such as Tye's, may help in the understanding of Rey's position. Rey's account acknowledges that there seem to be phenomenal properties, but shows why it is that these properties do not actually need to exist. Tye on the other hand thinks that represented properties are all actual properties of the external environment. Instead of holding that there are distinct phenomenal properties, someone like Tye will hold that states with qualitative content simply represent properties such as redness, and when we attempt to introspect these mental states, it is these properties of which we are actually aware. While both accounts do not posit phenomenal properties as properties of mental states, they accomplish this in different ways. Rey's does so in the context of a narrow account on which the semantics of a state with qualitative content is due to other states to which it is apt to hold causal relations. He argues that our states can still be significant to us even though phenomenal properties do not actually exist, because we can account for states with qualitative content without them. Tye and other externalist representationalists who accept transparency believe that there are no separate phenomenal properties simply because they think that our representations

represent elements of the world, and no distinct phenomenal properties are needed on such an account.

Conclusion

Rey's is an unusual position that, if it is successful, manages to reconcile the seemingly opposing positions of representationalism and internalism. In the next chapter I consider internalism in further depth and present a variety of relevant alternative views. This provides the necessary background for analysing Rey's view in Chapter 4. There it will be addressed whether internalism proves after all to be a desirable or even tenable option for a representationalist of Rey's variety.

Chapter 3: Issues in Assessing an Internalist Account

To assess Rey's account several issues need to be considered. Chapter 1 motivated internalism largely through the use of thought experiments concerning colour perception, specifically concerning inverted earth and the transparency of mental states. Here I show that these arguments can be extended, and that there is reason to accept internalism about other types of states as well. I consider the objection to internalism that it is motivated by mere intuition, and I reject it. I also explore some other possible views, showing how Rey's fits within the range of alternatives. I begin with the internalist view of Terrence Horgan, John Tienson and George Graham, which serves both to help motivate internalism and to provide an internalist alternative to Rey's view. The latter point is important because the objections I make to Rey's view in the next chapter do not apply to internalist views in general, as I shall make clear by reference to the view of Horgan *et al.* I then turn to externalist possibilities. I briefly illustrate how a variety of different externalist views are able to respond to the thought experiments that motivate internalism. Finally, I turn to weak externalism, a view that proves to be very important to my proposed alternative to Rey's view. Weak externalism holds that there can be narrowly individuated mental states, but there can only be such states given that there are other widely individuated ones. As the following chapter shows, Rey's view has difficulty accounting for the substantiality and determinacy of qualitative content, but a weak externalist compromise seems to be able to salvage a modified version of his view.

3.1 Beyond Colour Perception: Extending the Arguments

The motivations for the narrow content view that we have considered so far depend heavily on the case of colour perception. The inverted earth experiment and the transparency issue both, at least primarily, concern colour perception. One can ask whether arguments concerning colour experience apply to other perceptual experiences. We perceive innumerable many other elements of the external world besides colour, including shape, size, texture and, if they are in fact located in the external world, a myriad of tastes and smells. Moreover, we can perceive some of these, such as shape and size, through more than one sense. In the inverted earth case, we see that the way experience presents the world to us phenomenologically can fail to correspond to the way the world is. The internalist intuition in this case is that experiences are individuated by, or at least in conjunction with, their phenomenology. However, we might not think the same about other types of perceptions, and in particular those that can be checked against perceptions of the same element of the world through a different means. Imagine someone who is looking at something square, but to whom it seems round. It seems one might not have an internalist intuition in this case: one might think such a perceiver is having a visual experience as of squareness, especially given the fact that the individual can reach out and touch the object to have a haptic experience as of squareness.

I think that this objection to the motivations for internalism points to a lack of breadth of examples used rather than anything fundamentally wrong with the internalist position. I will look quickly at the case of shape perception to see how an inverted-earth type thought experiment might be mounted there. I hope to

demonstrate that a treatment similar to that given in the visual experience case can be given in a case involving a different sense. This will show that internalist intuitions and motivations are not peculiar to the case of vision.

In *Mental Content*, Colin McGinn gives an example of a perceiver, whom he calls Percy, who, due to some atmospheric condition, perceives round objects as square.³² (Note that McGinn is a weak externalist. His position is explored in Section 3.5.) Imagine a world filled with people who are physically identical to us, and phenomenologically identical to us in all respects except that round things seem to them the same way that square things seem to us on earth. When an individual on this twin earth, Percy, sees a coin, in as far as the visual appearance of the object is concerned the coin seems square. For now, let us say that Percy never has the opportunity to touch, or sense in any way other than visually, the coin or any other round objects. We must now ask what type of experience Percy has when looking at the coin. There seems to be a meaningful sense in which he is having an experience as of squareness, rather than as of roundness. This would be a direct parallel with what the inverted earth experiment attempts to demonstrate about colour experience.

One might think that there is a problematic complication if we introduce another mode of sensory experience, say, by allowing Percy to touch the coin. Here while it seems visually to Percy as if he is experiencing squareness, haptically it seems as if he is experiencing roundness. There seems to be problem for Rey and other internalists: that in this case Percy is having one experience, but we are pulled in two different directions as to how it is individuated. Yet Rey could merely claim

³² McGinn, Colin. *Mental Content*, Blackwell: 1989, p. 60.

that Percy has two separate experiences, a visual experience as of squareness and a haptic experience as of roundness. Giving this response creates an interesting situation for Rey, but not necessarily a problematic one. If Percy has two separate experiences, one as of squareness and one as of roundness, at most one of these experiences can be veridical. The natural conclusion from this is that the experience as of roundness is veridical and that the other experience is not. An externalist might suggest that there is a problem with the internalist view because of this non-veridicality. However, the Percy thought experiment attempts to show the existence of narrow content by presenting a case in which the phenomenology of experience does not correspond to the way the world actually is. In any such case, if an individual is able to experience the same phenomenon through multiple senses, the narrow content that had been argued for will turn out to be non-veridical. It may seem *prima facie* to be problematic that all instances of narrow content that we can find are non-veridical. However, the reason for this non-veridicality is the kind of thought experiment being used here: the cases in question are those where the world and perceptions of it do not correspond. It is perfectly reasonable to claim that Percy has a non-veridical experience as of squareness, but that it is nonetheless an experience as of squareness. (Though admittedly this may not eliminate the externalist possibility. McGinn uses the argument in the context of an argument for weak externalism, as we will see below.)

While Rey does not make it explicit how his arguments apply to cases other than that of colour, it seems that his picture can work for at least the perception of shapes, and is likely to apply more broadly as could be shown with different thought

experiments. The case of colour does seem to give us information about other cases and a motivation for internalism in them, as well as in this particular case.

3.2 How Well Motivated is Narrow Content?

One can argue that the motivations for narrow content given in Chapter 1 may not provide the support for the narrow content view that internalists hope. The reasons for accepting internalism mentioned above rely on intuition; they might seem in need of further justification. While intuitions provide a good foundation for theory, intuition can be false, and might be in the cases motivating internalism. In the case of the inverted earth argument we must intuit that my twin on inverted earth has an experience as of greenness when she is looking at red grass through inverting lenses. In the case of the transparency argument we must intuit, at least when given examples like that of the colour-blind patient, that experience has a phenomenology which is introspectable. It is possible for these intuitions to be incorrect, or for people to have different intuitions (as Tye in fact would claim he does in the case of transparency).

One (at least partial) response to this charge is to give an argument that does not rely on intuition. One way to do this is to turn to empirical evidence, for example evidence concerning the laws of perception. Rey does just this—he claims that if an inverted earthling on inverted earth has an experience as of redness when looking at red grass, the laws of perception tell us that this experience still feels coolish, in the way that greenish and blueish experiences normally do.³³ This would indicate the existence of some narrow content, if just the feeling of coolishness. However, such an

³³Rey, 1998, pp. 444-445.

argument also seems to fail to give the solid philosophical foundation that internalism needs. If the laws of perception do turn out to work this way it will be empirical evidence for internalism. Yet a philosophical thesis should not depend on empirical evidence: the position should withstand different empirically falsifiable theories about how perception works. As such we need philosophical motivations for internalism that will still hold if certain views about the laws of perception turn out to be incorrect.

Internalists must find another response to the charge that motivations for internalism are based on intuition. While our intuitions do seem to be internalist for some cases—those of purely phenomenal states and perceptual experiences—there are some reasons we may want to doubt intuition. In the internalism/externalism debate there are in fact some conflicts of intuition, which means that some intuitions will have to be sacrificed. The water twin-earth case we considered in Chapter 1, which motivates externalism about at least some types of propositional attitudes, is an appeal to intuition. The experiment brings out the intuition that the external environment of an individual matters for the individuation of her thoughts. At first this might not seem to be in conflict with our internalist intuitions about other types of mental states. However, once philosophers begin to build these intuitions into theories, the conflict becomes apparent. Externalists, for example, maintain that we are essentially beings within worlds, and that the contents of individuals' mental states depend upon the world outside the bodies, brains or minds of those individuals. Internalists, by virtue of being internalists, cannot accept this. Another conflict is apparent in the case of perceptual experiences. Motivations like Block's inverted

earth thought experiment bring to light the intuitive appeal of internalism for these states. However, despite Rey's claims it seems reasonable to believe that the perceptual experiences represent elements of the external environment. Given such a view, these experiences would naturally be thought to depend for their individuation upon elements of the world external to an individual. These cases are evidence that at least some of our intuitions must be sacrificed. In light of this, it is necessary to further explore the alternative possibilities before we can go on to analyse Rey's view.

3.3 An Internalism Unlike Rey's

Let us turn to an internalist alternative to Rey's position. This alternative shows how internalism can make systematic sense of mental content. This helps to make internalism more plausible, but also provides a point of contrast to show that the fate of internalism does not rest with Rey's view alone. Horgan *et al.* argue that the individuation of mental states needs to be grounded in something internal to us, not in something in the world beyond the body, brain or mind.³⁴

Horgan *et al.*'s position can best be explained in terms of the brain-in-the-vat thought experiment. Imagine a brain in a vat of nutrients, which by various ingenious manipulations is kept physically type-identical to one's own brain. Many people intuit

³⁴ Horgan, Terrence and John Tienson. "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality", in D. Chalmers (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. Oxford: 2002, accessed via <http://consc.net/neh/papers/horgan.htm>, and Horgan, Terrence, John Tienson and George Graham, "Phenomenal Intentionality and the Brain in a Vat", in R. Schantz (ed.), *The Externalist Challenge*, Walter de Gruyter, 2004, accessed via <http://dingo.sbs.arizona.edu/~thorgan/papers/Phenomenal.Intentionality.and.BIV.htm>.

that, given that this brain is kept physically type-identical to one's own brain, its phenomenology is likewise type-identical to one's own: that what it is *like* to be this brain does not differ in any way from one's own conscious experience. To belay worries about mental processes being inside the wider body, this thought experiment may also use entire bodies in vats, which are kept physically type-identical with bodies of people out in the world. The vat-type thought experiment is rendered more plausible by a connected consideration: it seems to be epistemically possible that I in fact am a brain in a vat (though as we will see externalists can argue that their view shows that this is not possible, and moreover that their view allows us to come to know this). Given this, it seems that a brain in a vat and I can have mental states that, at least so far as phenomenology is concerned, are of the same type. Given the brain-in-the-vat possibility, Horgan *et al.* take phenomenology to be more essential to the types of mental states we can have than anything in the external world can be.

Horgan *et al.* make a case for the narrow content view by claiming that individuation must be in terms of phenomenology, which they take to be narrow, and then arguing that all mental states, including propositional attitudes, have some phenomenal aspect. They argue that phenomenology and intentionality (or representation) are not separate, as many philosophers believe, but in fact phenomenology is essential to what mental states represent. On this view phenomenology is narrow, as the brain-in-the-vat thought experiment suggests, and because of this mental states are narrow (except for a select few, as we will see below). For Horgan *et al.* even propositional content has phenomenal feel. There is a certain appeal to asserting that the content of a propositional attitude is partly

phenomenal as well as representing elements in the world. It seems intuitively plausible that it actually feels different to have the thought that rabbits have tails than it does to have the thought that “collections of undetached rabbit parts have tail-subsets”.³⁵ Even though the thoughts have the same extension, it seems there is no way we could mistake these thoughts for each other. Horgan and Tienson are willing to assert that “[i]f you pay attention to your own experience, we think you will come to appreciate [the] truth [concerning the phenomenology of mental states]”.³⁶ It should be noted, however, that externalists can claim that Horgan *et al.* are conflating believing, hoping and so forth with experiencing.

Even though Horgan *et al.* give an internalist account, they do admit that there are cases of wide content, including the use of some indexicals. Consider the belief “that painting is hanging crookedly”. There does seem to be some narrow content: in a way it seems that the same type of thought could be had by a brain in a vat or my twin on twin earth who is looking at a numerically distinct painting that is physically identical to the one I can see. However, there is also a sense in which they are different thoughts, as they are about different paintings, or in the brain in a vat case, no painting at all. Propositional attitudes in many cases also pick out entities in the world, and beliefs are made true or false because of them, so it is also intuitive to claim that their contents are individuated by some elements of the external world.

Yet Horgan *et al.* maintain that narrow individuation of mental content is more fundamental than wide individuation. They do hold that some states must in part be individuated widely, but claim that this could not be so unless they also depend for

³⁵ Horgan and Tienson, 2002, Section 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

their individuation on other, narrowly individuated states. The content must depend for its individuation on other mental states that in turn are individuated only by our phenomenology and so are narrowly rather than widely individuated. (This is in fact the converse of the weak externalist view, which will be considered in Section 3.5.) The authors mention the example of the (unconscious) mental states that are required for making judgements about the external world.³⁷ They ask us to consider the scenario of going on a hike. Where we judge that we might best put our feet is based upon there appearing to be ground, and upon similar past appearances, the judgements we made at those earlier junctures, and the apparent results of those judgements. The brain in a vat who has the same phenomenology as me depends on the same things to make her judgements. (Note that an externalist will claim that a brain in a vat is not able to make apparent judgements, let alone real ones, as these would require elements in the external world to individuate them. A great deal rests on the assumption that brains in vats can have contentful mental states at all.) Yet if the argument does work, this is a way to expound on the idea that a brain in a vat identical to my brain will have the same mental states as me. Horgan *et al.* can maintain that what really matters for the individuation of the most fundamental part of mental states is phenomenal appearance. They hope to show that phenomenal appearance permeates our mental content far beyond the perceptual experiences and purely phenomenal states. In their work Horgan *et al.* find that wide content only makes sense in the context of narrow content.

³⁷ Horgan, Tienson and Graham, 2004, Section 3.6.

The view Horgan *et al.* present is a way of explaining the individuation of mental content in a way such that phenomenal feel is most essential to individuation. As we have seen, this results in an internalist view. For them, phenomenology is of foremost importance, and our propositional attitudes could not be the ones they are without phenomenology. The fact that we are creatures embodied within environments is of far less importance. Externalists, on the other hand, think that embodiment within an environment is of utmost importance. As such, both of these camps identify an element of the sentient creature's situation that is what they hold to be essential to making mental states the states they are, be it the environment or phenomenology. Horgan *et al.* do help Rey's case to a degree. They show that focusing on phenomenology can provide an at least somewhat plausible scaffolding for a comprehensive theory of content. In doing this they show that it can make sense for content to be individually independent of the environment in which an individual is embodied.

3.4 Varieties of Externalism and Inverted Earth

While the inverted earth case seems to motivate internalism, externalist possibilities are also able to account for this case. The scope of positions available to an externalist warrants mention, and I explore it with reference to internalist intuitions. This section will look at possible responses to the inverted earth case from various externalist views. First it considers simple causal views, then the possibility of teleological externalism, which maintains that the content of states is individuated by the evolutionary role of these states.

Recall that in the inverted earth case the issue at stake is the content of experiences had by a person who is phenomenologically identical to me and physically identical to me from the retinas inward, but who has had inverting lenses on her eyes since birth. Specifically, the question is whether she has an experience as of redness or as of greenness when she looks at red grass. Internalists maintain that she has an experience as of greenness. For them what matters for individuation is inside an individual, and my twin is physically identical to me from the retinas inward. They hold that the differences in the external environment do not matter. However, a simple causal externalist will hold the opposite: that my twin has an experience as of redness. On a simple causal view, features of the external world that are relevant to individuation are different in my twin's case and mine: what she reliably or most commonly picks out when having certain mental states, and any adapted use of these mental states within a lifetime. Views such as Fodor's (now rejected) ideal co-variation theory, which holds that states get their content from what they enable us to discriminate in ideal conditions, arise out of such simple positions.³⁸ Because my twin has had lenses in her eyes since birth, the experience in question reliably enables her to pick out redness, and it has done so throughout her life. If it has adapted during her lifetime to pick out something, then it has adapted to pick out redness. While this does not coincide with the standard intuitions, it seems to be at least possible that externalists of this type are able to provide a consistent externalist account of the inverted earth case.

³⁸ See e.g. Fodor, Jerry, "Psychosemantics or Where Do Truth Conditions Come From", *Mind and Cognition*, ed. W. Lycan, Blackwell: 1990.

However, another version of the inverted earth case demonstrates a potential problem for the type of externalist mentioned above. Imagine that I immigrate to inverted earth, and replace my twin there, having had inverting lenses affixed in my eyes on the journey. The different types of externalists we have been discussing say different things about the content of experiences I have when looking at the red grass on inverted earth. For an externalist who maintains that experiences are individuated by what they reliably pick out, it may seem that when I first arrive on inverted earth they reliably pick out red things, so I have an experience as of redness. However, for externalists who hold that mental states are individuated by what they have most commonly picked out or what they have adapted over the course of a lifetime to pick out, I have an experience as of greenness when I come to inverted earth. What my experience has picked out in the past or what it has adapted to pick out does not change upon my arrival to inverted earth. For these externalists, a problem arises when after an immigrant has been on inverted earth for an extended length of time. The worry occurs in the case of externalists who think I am having an experience as of greenness, because, as I spend more time on inverted earth, the state may have to be individuated differently. As Block points out in his original *Inverted Earth* paper, what the state has most commonly picked out will change, and possibly what the state has adapted in my lifetime to pick out may change as well.³⁹ What begins as an experience as of greenness may become an experience as of redness, both for those who think the change will be instantaneous and for those who think it will be gradual.

³⁹ Block, 1990, p. 61.

This seems troubling, especially if it is expected to happen without my noticing (as would be expected to happen in the parallel water case where I gradually come to have twater-content rather than water-content thoughts). In keeping with our intuition about the phenomenal feeling of perceptual experiences, it seems that experiences as of redness feel different from experiences as of greenness, and that based on that feeling we can tell them apart and know which we have. However, this point may not be as powerful as it at first seems, and empirical evidence may not support it. For example, we experience colours gradually changing with the sunset everyday, and it can be remarkably hard to draw one's attention to this change.⁴⁰

However, there are other externalist possibilities that cohere better with the inverted earth thought experiment. Teleological externalists such as David Papineau and Ruth Millikan provide good examples.⁴¹ Teleological externalists believe that over the course of evolution certain states come to refer to certain aspects of the world, and that these states are individuated by whatever they have evolved to refer to. Even when we have non-veridical states, our states are the ones they are because of their evolutionary roles. It seems that teleological externalists might be able to comply with the internalist intuition about the standard inverted earth case and hold that the twin on inverted earth has states with the same content as my states. When I look at grass, the evolutionary role of the state with which I normally pick out

⁴⁰ Regardless of the empirical evidence, the problem might not be insurmountable. Bill Lycan attempts to fix the problem by separating the representational content of an experience from the way it feels, which he considers to be a higher order property of the state. See e.g. Lycan, William, "Representational Theories of Consciousness", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2005 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2005/entries/consciousness-representational/>.

⁴¹ See e.g. Papineau, David *Philosophical Naturalism*, Basil Blackwell: 1993, and Millikan, Ruth, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories*, MIT Press: 1984.

greenness has the evolutionary function of referring to greenness. Thus it is an experience as of greenness according to teleological externalists. If my twin did not have inverting lenses, when she looked at red grass she would presumably be in different physical and psychological states (triggered by the different light that reaches her retinas), which had evolved to refer to redness, and would be an experience as of redness. Yet in the experiment, my twin does have inverting lenses. Let us assume that it is not normal for members of her species to have inverting lenses, and has not been normal over an evolutionary timescale. It seems that when my twin is looking at red grass, she will have the mental state I have when looking at green grass, and this will be an experience as of greenness. This appears consistent with the intuitions that might otherwise lead us to internalism. In this particular case, at least, when my twin is internally identical to me, she has an experience with the same type of content as the one I have.

However, teleological externalism is not able to coincide with our intuitions in other cases. We can imagine entire inverted species whose members are physically and phenomenologically identical to us except that they have inverting lenses, and have had them throughout the evolutionary history of the species. In this population, that state that in us typically refers to green things would seemingly have evolved to refer to red things. According to a teleological externalist, these inverted earthlings have experiences as of redness when looking at red grass through inverting lenses. These individuals are physically identical to us, but nonetheless, at a given instant they may have mental states with different contents than ours, such as having an

experience as of redness rather than an experience as of greenness. Teleological externalism does not seem to satisfy the internalist intuition after all.

Externalists do not have to capitulate because of the inverted earth thought experiment. However, the various externalist possibilities open are to some extent counter-intuitive, especially when considering modified versions of the inverted earth thought experiment. These externalist possibilities show that one does not have to be an internalist, yet in themselves they do nothing to show that internalism is not a viable path to pursue. However, as the next chapter will reveal, there are reasons why internalism, at least of Rey's variety, may have trouble explaining certain things about the nature of qualitative content. The following section introduces a potentially more appealing version of externalism, the weak externalist view. Understanding this possibility will be necessary to understanding my critique of Rey's view and proposed alternative to it.

3.5 Weak Externalism

Weak externalism provides an important alternative if internalism turns out to be a flawed position, as it satisfies some of the intuitions that motivate internalism. Externalism in fact comes in a variety of types, and some versions make compromises that might satisfy those who are tempted by the narrow content view. The simplest type of externalism is "strong externalism", which maintains that mental states are individuated directly with regard to elements in an individual's actual environment, i.e. that they are individuated by these elements themselves, rather than by other mental states which are individuated by them. However, the majority of externalists

in fact hold some type of weak externalism, maintaining that some of our mental states are not individuated directly by anything in the external world, only indirectly. Here we look at the versions of weak externalism held by Cynthia Macdonald and Colin McGinn. The two give similar but distinct accounts.

Weak externalism claims that the content of all mental states ultimately depends on the content of states that are individuation-dependent on factors in the external world. While the content of some mental states will be individuated directly with regard to elements in the external world, the content of others will instead be individuated with regard to the content of other mental states, which will in turn either be individuated with regard to elements in the external world or with regard to the content of other mental states, and so forth, eventually connecting with some state whose content is directly individuated externalistically. In one sense, weak externalism can be seen as a response to the case of certain mental states, such as a thought with the content *round square* or the desire to see a unicorn. It seems that no elements in my environment are able to directly individuate thoughts with the content *round square*, because there are no round squares in my environment, never have been, and never could be. The standard weak externalist can claim that my thought with the content *round square* can somehow be individuated in a way that can be traced to the external world. This will be done based on states that have been individuated with regard to elements in the external world, perhaps beliefs about squares and about roundness. The content still gets to be the content it is because of elements in the world external to an individual's body. Likewise, my desire to see a unicorn might be individuated based on beliefs about horns and horses.

The weak externalist system could be filled out in a number of different ways. To see how this might be accomplished, consider Macdonald's position on act-types. She believes that action has to be individuated with regard to objects and so forth in the environment, and that the explanatory role of mental content is to rationalise action. As such she believes that one needs to taxonomise mental content widely in at least some cases. The very existence of contentful mental states depends on the existence of directly widely individuated mental states. Before considering Macdonald's position in greater depth, it is advantageous to explain some terminology of weak externalism. Certain content—that which only weakly depends on elements in the external environment for its individuation—can in fact be called “narrow content”. It is “narrow” only in a limited sense of the term: this narrow content is directly dependent on other, wide content, and as such indirectly dependent on elements in the external environment.

Consider Macdonald's example of washing. Washing, for her, is a narrow act type while washing in water is a wide act type, which has to be individuated with regard to water. Washing does not have to be directly individuated based on anything in the external world, but only makes sense in the context of actions such as washing in water and washing in other substances.⁴² Essentially, for Macdonald, we are embodied creatures and our mental states have to be characterised in terms of action. The way we interact with the world shows what types of mental states we have. She holds that actions have to be individuated with regard to *successful* actions; after all an unsuccessful washing is not really a washing at all. For there to be successful

⁴² Macdonald, Cynthia, “Externalism and Norms” in Antony O’hear (ed.) *Current Issues in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge University Press: 1998, p. 289.

actions, there must be successful actions involving real interaction with elements in the external world. A successful washing will involve washing in something, for example water. A thought about washing will thus have to be individually connected to actual, successful washing in something. When one is thinking about washing there is narrow and wide content involved. One can be thinking only about the narrow act of washing, but this makes sense only in the context of particular instances of washing that will be washing in a substance. As such there is narrow content, in the loose sense of the term available to weak externalists.

Let us turn to an example that will help to give a richer understanding of individuation for weak externalists. This example also highlights features specific to McGinn's account. Recall Percy (from Section 3.1), who, when he is looking at something round, has an experience that has the same phenomenology as that of an earthling who is looking at something square. McGinn agrees with the internalist that as far as the phenomenal aspect of perceptual experience is concerned, phenomenology cannot come apart from content. Whatever the situation in the external environment, the content must be individuated along with phenomenology. However, weak externalist accounts allow that this does not mean that states with qualitative content are individuated narrowly. In this case, McGinn argues that Percy's experience is individuated by the kind *square*. McGinn, like Macdonald, relies on the relationship between mental content and action to argue for weak externalism.⁴³

⁴³ See McGinn, 1989, circa p. 70 for more detail on McGinn's view.

Imagine that Percy is in a room with a large circle painted on the floor. If he decides to walk in a path around the circle, he will move in the shape of a square around it—that is, he will move “squarewise”—because he has an experience as of squareness. Using an example such as this, McGinn thinks he can show that Percy’s perceptual experience is individuated with respect to the kind *square*. McGinn holds that the content of perception supervenes on bodily states, including behaviour. He thinks that the content of Percy’s perceptual experiences supervenes on his behaviour, and that his behaviour has to be individuated with regard to the kind *square*. His behaviour is essentially “squarewise”: it is the kind of behaviour which is appropriate when dealing with square objects. The behaviour is in fact individuated as a squarewise one because of this connection to the kind *square*. Since Percy’s perceptual experience supervenes on his behaviour, it also would not be the perceptual experience that it is without the kind *square*. Thus Percy’s perceptual experience is weakly external because it is individuated with regard to the kind *square*, through its connection with action. McGinn claims that this point generalises. Other perceptual experiences also supervene on behaviours, and these behaviours are ones that are appropriate when dealing with certain kinds. These kinds are not entities that exist within an individual, so McGinn’s is an externalist position. It is only weakly externalist. The property of squareness, or any other property, does not have to be instantiated in the perceiver’s environment and does not have to have any causal link to the perceiver. As can be seen, this is similar to Macdonald’s argument, though she does not speak of content supervening on behaviour. In both cases, actions are relevant to the individuation of mental states, and actions require individuation with

regard to elements not found within in an individual, be they instantiated in the individual's environment or otherwise.

It should be noted that a difference between McGinn and Macdonald arises concerning the commitments made by an externalist. McGinn believes that the (strong) externalist view about a particular state commits one to the view that externalistically individuated contents are ones that one comes to have based on causal contact with elements in the external environment. However, Macdonald does not make such a commitment. She suggests that a thought about numbers, say my belief that two plus two equals four, is an example of a mental state which may be individuation-dependent on factors in the external world, even though it may be that the factors are abstract, and thus not part of the causal order.⁴⁴ Yet as we have seen, for both of them, an individual does not need to have any causal link to something that individuates one of that individual's narrow mental states. For both Macdonald and McGinn, these states are indirectly individuated with regard not to anything within an individual's body, but rather to abstract types. For example, an experience as of squareness is as of squareness not because of anything within an individual's body or environment, but because of the abstract kind *square*. However, for Macdonald, although the kinds are abstract, in general the relation between content and the world is effected through instances of the kinds. The internalist/externalist issue is not a simple dichotomy of individuating elements being either abstract kinds or things in the environment.

⁴⁴ Macdonald, Cynthia, personal correspondence, 26th June 2006.

Weak externalism accords with intuition to some degree. The view saves the externalist from having to point to something in the external environment that directly individuates a mental state, in this case because abstract kinds are used for individuation. On a weak externalist account I do not have to accept that my thought about a round square is individuated directly by anything in the external environment, nor do I have to accept this about the experience as of greenness or pain. However, a few concerns should be pointed out. Neither Macdonald's nor McGinn's view accords well with the brain-in-a-vat intuition, and this could be considered disadvantageous as compared with internalism. The intuition holds that we could have the same types of mental states we do now if we were brains floating in vats in otherwise empty worlds. Macdonald does not believe that this is possible as she believes that (at least the majority of) mental states are individuated by elements actually instantiated in the external world, though not always directly. McGinn's system might seem to accord better with the brain in a vat intuition. The kinds that matter for individuation need not be instantiated in an individual's environment, so changing what is instantiated in the environment seems not to make an individutive difference to mental states. However, McGinn relies on actions that depend on abstract types. If these abstract types were different, then the mental states of an individual would be different as well. Thus changing an element of the world external to an individual's brain, body or mind (in the form of changing these abstract types) nonetheless makes an individutive difference to the content of that individual's mental states. To that extent, the brain-in-the-vat intuition is not satisfied. It seems that the objects involved in the individuation of actions must be instantiated.

However, weak externalists can fare better in the case of the inverted earth intuition. When my twin with the inverting lenses looks at red grass on inverted earth, her mental states are not directly individuated by this red grass. Thus, depending on the account one gives, she might have an experience as of greenness. (She will act as though she is in the presence of green grass, so explanations of individuation involving action are well positioned to satisfy this intuition.)

Because a weak externalist view admits of some content that is not directly individuated by something in the external world, it is less of an affront to our intuitions than strong externalism. For the weak externalist, it makes sense that for some content it is not immediately obvious how the elements of the external world matter for individuation. It is possible to say that states with qualitative content are in fact some of these weakly external states. They could simply depend for their individuation on wide states such as certain propositional attitudes or physical states of perception. They could even be individuated by their narrow functional role, i.e. the way they interact with other mental states, allowing a form of functionalism. This would be very like the position Rey maintains, except that it is weakly externalist rather than internalist. Both Rey and someone holding such a weak externalist position maintain that certain mental states are individuated by their narrow functional role, and in both scenarios there are other mental states that are not individuated in this way. The difference is merely that Rey does not claim that the individuation of the contents of states has to be grounded in elements in the external world. The weak externalist believes that the individuation of these apparently narrow mental states actually depends in some way on the external world via the states that

they interact with. Rey does not think that there is such an individuating dependence. This shows why such a position is an important recourse for someone rejecting Rey's view.

Conclusion

Examining these positions has provided the background necessary for an analysis of Rey's view. Internalism appears to be well motivated, but it is clear that Rey's version is not the only version of internalism available, and that the position must be judged on its own merits rather than on the merits of the intuitions that support it. Moreover, there are a number of externalist positions that are to some degree able to address the reasons one might accept internalism. Weak externalism in particular is an interesting possibility, and a version of this view transpires to be very similar to Rey's own view. The following chapter examines the problems with Rey's view, and addresses a weak externalist compromise, which is able to achieve many of the goals of Rey's endeavour.

Chapter 4: Rey's Account Assessed and Adapted

This chapter will assess the viability of Rey's account. First it will examine whether it is possible to be representationalist about states with qualitative content given eliminativism about phenomenal properties. This examination will consider the analogy Rey uses to defend this possibility, and look at an argument that Joe Levine makes against Rey on the grounds that his view is unable to account for the substantiality and determinacy of qualitative content. These considerations will show that it is not in fact viable to be a fictionalist eliminativist about states with qualitative content. I will then propose an alternative account, which attempts to salvage Rey's project. This account is intended to be a representationalist internalism along Rey's lines, excepting that it abandons eliminativism. However, I conclude that this account is not viable as a strictly internalist account, and a weak externalist compromise must be made. Despite this, by adopting this account, Rey can challenge the standard representationalist externalist account, and show that mental states do not need to be individuated by some element in the external world that they represent.

4.1 Mickey Mouse Revisited

Rey's argument for eliminativist representationalism relies heavily on a metaphor with fiction. Specifically, he speaks of someone attending a Mickey Mouse movie and the representations that individual has. He hopes to use this metaphor to show that it is possible to be both a representationalist with regard to qualitative content and an eliminativist with regard to phenomenal properties. However, I will show that there is a significant disanalogy between this case and the case of mental

states with qualitative content and the representational content that they have. This section explores this disanalogy and the effect it has on Rey's argument, as well as examining another case to explore whether it is in fact a better analogy. It happens that in both cases there are external factors that seem relevant to the state's ability to represent and so to its individuation. Rey needs a case analogous to that in which the content of a state arises out of its narrow functional role. However, neither of the two cases that I consider seems to be analogous with this. Instead, it seems that *what* these states represent is relevant to their having the content they do, and that this concerns factors external to the mind, brain and body.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Rey uses an analogy with watching a Mickey Mouse movie to show that states that do not represent anything real can actually be representations nonetheless. However, a little analysis of this case reveals that it is unlike the case of narrow qualitative content. It does not seem to support the idea of representational content in the relevant case, where content is supposed to arise out of narrow functional role alone. Rey argues that regardless of whether the images on a movie screen represent anything real, they have significance for a viewer. People with no knowledge of the nature of movies will in fact mistake the represented mice and so forth for real things, which, according to Rey, shows that seeing them is in an important sense the same for the viewer as seeing something real. The significance does not arise from the real Mickey or any such thing, because there is no real Mickey. Likewise, our narrow mental states do not actually represent anything real, but nonetheless represent and have the same type of significance for us as states that

represent real things. In both cases it seems there is real representational content, but nothing real represented.

However, this case and the case of qualitative content are only superficially alike. In the case of the movie, while the individual in question has not had prior experience with movies, he presumably can appeal to other representations, representations of real things, to give content to the representations he has while watching the movie. It is hard to imagine someone who does not have prior experience of worldly elements, such as mice, sentient creatures and language, understanding very much of a Mickey Mouse movie. The normal viewer will recognise Mickey as a mouse, or at least as an animate creature, and many of the other images and situations, presumably at least in part because of contact with mice or other animate beings. A viewer has real, contentful representations of Mickey Mouse because they are grounded in representations of real things: such representations are possible only in virtue of other representations that represent real things. However, there is nothing corresponding to this on Rey's account to help make qualitative content genuinely representational. From an internalist perspective, the context given by elements in the external world cannot be involved in giving a state qualitative content or significance. Whereas in the movie case we can give an alternative explanation for the origin of representational content, in the case of qualitative content we cannot. Here it is a case of content arising out of narrow functional role alone.

A more pertinent example to consider might be an analogy between mental states and language. Rey's account is, after all, a language of thought account, and the

way words come to have meaning in natural language seems relevant. In particular, consider a possible analogy between a representational state and a nonsense phrase such as those found in Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky".⁴⁵ This case could perhaps provide an explanation of how representation is able to come about when nothing is represented. The nonsense words in "Jabberwocky" have significance in some sense. Moreover, they appear to be the correct type of syntactic elements to represent, just as mental states are. Along the lines of Donald Davidson, I see no reason to think that there is any special sort of "metaphorical meaning" in such a case.⁴⁶ There is nothing to make this sort of metaphorical use of language different from literal ones in terms of how it comes to be contentful. However, we must ask whether the significance of the nonsense words and phrases in "Jabberwocky" depends in some way on genuine representation. It is hard to believe that the words "brillig", "slithy" and "toves" actually represent anything, and it is certainly not clear what they represent. Moreover, even if they do represent, it seems that the most convincing explanation for this is in fact an externalist one, ruining the analogy for Rey. The way the words sound reminds us of other words that represent elements of the world. "Slithy", for example, is reminiscent of the words "slimy", "slyly" and perhaps "swarthy". Here, without any represented elements to turn to, we use other elements of language, which do represent something real, to account for representation. Representation within a context appears to depend on an external context.

⁴⁵ Macdonald, personal correspondence, 26th June 2006.

⁴⁶ Davidson, Donald. "What Metaphors Mean", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn, 1978) 31-47.

The “Jabberwocky” case is thus no better than the Mickey Mouse case. The words (such as “slimy” and “slyly”) that help give the nonsense words in “Jabberwocky” any representational content they have presumably get their content from those things that they represent. Instead of helping to show how syntactical items such as words or mental states can come to have representational content on a narrow functionalist account, the “Jabberwocky” analogy instead suggests how difficult such a task is. Most plausibly, it seems that if the nonsense words and phrases in the “Jabberwocky” represent anything at all, their powers of representation originate from connections with representations that do represent real things, and, it is reasonable to say, get what content they have from them.

In the Mickey Mouse case we can admit the existence of representation, but only in relation to contents of other representations that represent something real. In the Jabberwocky case, if representation is occurring, much the same is true. Looking at these cases suggests that if they are analogous to the case of qualitative content, then Rey’s view is incorrect. Rey cannot use this analogy to show that there is ontological room for representational content that does not represent anything real, nor, by extension, to show that there is narrow representational content of the type Rey describes. However, qualitative content might be unlike either movie images or nonsense words. I turn to another argument to show more conclusively why representationalism and eliminativism are ill-suited to each other.

4.2 Levine's Concerns About Rey's View

Rey's narrow representationalism is problematic because of his eliminativism. As Section 4.1 shows, Rey's analogy with a movie does not help to show that there can be states with representational content that do not represent anything real, unless this content depends on an external context. Levine provides an explicit argument that shows that representational content in the case of qualitative states has to be grounded in something real. He believes that such states could not otherwise come to have qualitative content of the determinate, substantial kind that they do. The argument pits Rey's representationalism against his eliminativism, in such a way as to make them incompatible.

Levine is concerned with the nature of qualitative content. He claims that "the determinacy and the substantiality of our conception of qualitative content" reveals something that Rey's position cannot account for.⁴⁷ Qualitative content does have significance for us and we are able to note certain things about it. This seems to be the case despite Rey's claim that phenomenal properties such as reddishness and painfulness do not exist. Levine thinks that certain aspects of this significance will be hard for an eliminativist to explain. Consider the way in which the experience as of redness differs from the experience as of orangeness, and how this is different from the way in which it differs from the experience of blueness and further different from the way in which it differs from the experience of high-pitchedness. Rey takes all of these experiences to represent fictional phenomenal properties. However, if there are no real properties such as reddishness and the like for these experiences to represent,

⁴⁷ Levine, Joseph. *Purple Haze: the Puzzle of Consciousness*, Oxford University Press: 2004. p. 146.

it is hard to explain the obvious differences between these experiences. The situation is best and most easily understood as involving differences in phenomenal properties. Specifically, Levine discusses the issue of “determinacy”, by which he is referring to the relations that seem to exist between different phenomenal properties, such as the determinate-determinable relations, and that are hard to explain if phenomenal properties do not exist.⁴⁸ For example, it seems to us that reddishness is a type of colouredishness and maroonishness is a type of reddishness.

On Rey’s account, the differences between states having different contents is accounted for in terms of differences in the representations themselves, rather than in terms of what is being represented. As we saw in Chapter 2, for Rey it is the functional role of a state within our mental processing systems that individuates mental states. However, it is much simpler to say that it seems to us that reddishness is a type of colouredishness because it is in fact true that reddishness is a type of colouredishness, rather than because of the functional role of the experiences as of redness and as of colour. (Or alternatively, it might be plausible to explain this with reference to redness and colour.) As such, it seems desirable to explain the determinate-determinable relations of our notions of the phenomenal by reference to what is represented, rather than the representation itself. It is in fact hard to see how these relations can be accounted for at all just by reference to differences in representations themselves. After all, they are just items defined by their narrow functional role. As we have seen, on Rey’s account the states have different content given that they have different relations to other mental states and perform different

⁴⁸ Levine, p. 146.

functional roles. These kinds of differences, concerning the representation and not what is represented, do not seem to be the right place to look for what accounts for either the determinacy or the more general substantiality of our notions of reddishness, painfulness and the like.

Levine argues that Rey's view faces a dilemma. Rey can hold either that the functional roles of states can adequately account for the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content, or that it cannot. Both options lead to difficulties for Rey. Consider the possibility that functional roles do offer an appropriate account. On this account, the fact that there appear to be phenomenal properties is problematic. Everything we want to posit about qualitative content would already be made possible by the states themselves without our needing to believe that there are phenomenal properties. The fact that an experience as of redness feels a certain way is accounted for by the functional role of the mental state, which determines the content, and is done so without reference to any property of reddishness. Rey gives an account of our representational states and how they are individuated without making use of any phenomenal properties. However, he then feels the need to somehow address the issue of why we think there are phenomenal properties, which he does through the use of his fictionalist eliminativism. Levine believes that Rey must take this extra step and account for the apparent existence of phenomenal properties because of the substantiality and determinacy of qualitative content. However, Levine responds that "if characteristic processing...captures what seems present to us in our experience of reddishness, then why bother with the fictionalism?"⁴⁹ Essentially, if this were the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

case, there would be no need to explain why we believe that phenomenal properties exist by introducing fictionalism. All the significance of our narrow mental states would be accounted for by representational properties individuated by their functional role. However, we do (or at least Rey claims we do) think that phenomenal properties exist. Levine suggests that this is virtually an admission from Rey that the functional role account does not address certain aspects of qualitative content sufficiently.

Recognising this possibility is to embrace the other horn of the dilemma: Rey could argue that functional role cannot account for determinacy and substantiality of phenomenal content. However, then he must be able to argue that something else actually is able to account for the determinacy and substantiality, and nothing in his account is able to do that. Rey cannot say that phenomenal properties are involved in accounting for the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content, because they do not exist. His fictionalist position places emphasis on the fact that it seems to us that phenomenal properties do exist. One might think that the fact that we believe there to be phenomenal properties could account for substantiality and determinacy. Yet this is not a viable option. It seems that these beliefs actually need explaining, and cannot be used in an explanation. Levine thus points out a major flaw in Rey's account. Regardless of what can be said about the functional roles of these states, it still seems that Rey is expecting qualitative content to exist in a vacuum, lacking external context or anything else real to ground them. However, this is a strange position to hold about content, especially representational content. The above considerations show that content must come from somewhere other than mere narrow functional roles.

4.3 Internalism and Phenomenal Properties

Someone wanting to adapt Rey's view so that it can withstand Levine's objection must find something beyond mere functional role as Rey defines it to use to individuate these states, presumably finding something real for representations of phenomenal properties to represent. For an internalist, the natural recourse is the possibility that phenomenal properties actually exist and are located internally to an individual. The determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content could come from these phenomenal properties. Such an internalist could then hold that representations with qualitative content actually represent phenomenal properties. I will examine this possibility in this section, and how it can be combined with elements of Rey's view.

It should be noted that Levine's objection does not show that phenomenal properties have to exist, only that there must be some real properties relevant to the individuation of states with qualitative content beyond those of merely having a certain functional role, and that these properties will be concerned with representation. In the externalist case it is especially clear that phenomenal properties do not have to exist. An externalist representationalist will hold that states with qualitative content actually represent elements of the external world and obtain their content from these. This can occur without any phenomenal properties. Tye, for example, holds a direct representationalist position that does not involve any phenomenal properties, as has been explored above. However, at least for an internalist, accepting phenomenal properties seems to be well motivated.

Faced with Levine's challenge, an internalist must identify something internal to an individual that could account for the determinacy and substantiality of

qualitative content. Phenomenal properties are a natural recourse: they are, after all, concerned with the qualitative content of perceptual experiences and phenomenal states. These properties may or may not be of a distinct, non-reducible kind. States with qualitative content could represent them, and they could be used to explain the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content. However, claiming that phenomenal properties exist shifts the burden of explaining these aspects of the nature of qualitative content. Instead of making inquiries into such content, we are left to make inquiries into phenomenal properties. It may be the case that nothing more can be said about phenomenal properties than that they exist brutely and give content to certain mental states. Yet unless something more can be said about them, proposing their existence as a solution to this problem is simply a place-holder for an explanation about what makes phenomenal content phenomenal content. Therefore, investigating the nature of phenomenal properties is necessary.

To an extent it is natural for an internalist to embrace phenomenal properties. While Rey tries to be an eliminativist internalist, his position, not that of a non-eliminativist internalist, is unusual. The belief in phenomenal properties coheres with the internalist brain-in-a-vat intuition. Recall the importance Horgan *et al.* place on phenomenology, as discussed in Chapter 3. For them, qualitative (or as they call it, “phenomenal”) content is narrow and fundamental to all mental states. They make a number of claims about phenomenology and qualitative content, arguing on the basis of the brain-in-the-vat hypothesis that they are narrow. For internalists who do not deflate phenomenology in the way Rey does, it is natural to accept the existence of phenomenal properties. This can explain why states have the phenomenology they do

without having to resort to externalism. For someone who appeals to an argument such as the brain-in-a-vat thought experiment, much of the attraction is concerned with phenomenology. Many think it is a genuine epistemic possibility that I am currently a brain in a vat. This implies the belief that it would feel the same for me if I were a brain in a vat, i.e. that it would be phenomenologically identical for me if I were. As such, it is the phenomenology that seems most central to the non-eliminativist internalist position. Assuming that the existence of phenomenal properties is the most reasonable way to expound on this focus on phenomenology, it is natural for an internalist to accept them.

It may be possible to naturalise phenomenal properties while remaining fairly close to Rey's intent. One is not forced to accept that they are non-physical properties. A functionalist account of phenomenal properties would cohere well with the bulk of Rey's account, as his is a functional role account of individuation. As has been stated, he maintains that the qualitative content of mental states is individuated with respect to the role these states play in mental processing. This same general means of explaining the individuation of mental states can be used in a scheme that involves phenomenal properties. As mentioned in Chapter 2, for Rey, perceptual experiences such as the experience as of redness are typically caused by certain proximal stimulus conditions, in this case states of perceiving redness, and will lead to other states due to sensory processing, such as, perhaps, the experience as of warm-colouredness. These same states can be used to explain the nature of qualitative content in a theory of phenomenal properties.

The linchpin of an account combining a functionalist view such as Rey's with a view involving phenomenal properties is the nature of phenomenal properties. Here I explore the possibility that phenomenal properties are a type of property had by states with qualitative content in virtue of the causal relations they are apt to bear to other mental states, i.e. in virtue of their functional roles. Phenomenal properties can be used to explain determinacy and substantiality, and the individuation of mental states would remain intimately connected to their functional role within mental processing.

On the proposed view, states with qualitative content themselves have phenomenal properties. The states are individuated just as they are on Rey's original account, in virtue of the functional role they play in mental processing. However, in virtue of the relations they hold to other states (in the case of reddishness, these may include the perceptual states concerned with perceiving redness and also the states that are caused by this, perhaps such as the experience of warm-colouredness), the states also have phenomenal properties. I sketch this view here and explore it more thoroughly in the following paragraphs. These properties, for example the reddishness of an experience as of redness, inhere in the states with qualitative content. However, they are not a special type of hard to naturalise, non-physical property. Instead, they are a type of functionally defined property had by states in virtue of the properties of the states it is apt to be caused by and apt to cause. The fact that phenomenal properties actually exist and are possessed by states with qualitative content explains how these states can be substantive in the way they are. It also provides space for an explanation of the determinacy of qualitative content. Phenomenal properties are real

properties that stand in determinate/determinable relationships to each other. The experiences that represent these properties reflect these determinate/determinable relationships.

Consider the experience as of redness. On the suggested account, as on Rey's unmodified account, this experience is typically caused by perceptions of redness and is apt to cause other states such as the experience as of warm-colouredness. Expanding Rey's view, one might also think that such a state is apt to cause certain propositional attitudes such as the belief that one is in the presence of a round, red object. On the new, modified model that introduces phenomenal properties, phenomenal properties are relevant to the individuation of states with qualitative content. Yet the fact that these states have the phenomenal properties they do, such as the experience as of redness being reddish, is due to causal relations that these states are apt to bear to those other states, the perception of redness, experience as of warm-colouredness, beliefs about redness and so forth. This is due to the fact that phenomenal properties are individuated functionally. The reddishness of the experience as of redness is fixed by the properties of these other states to which that experience is apt to bear causal relations. The perception of redness and beliefs concerning redness have the property of representing redness. The experience as of redness has the content it does because it represents reddishness, and that property is individuated by properties of the states to which that experience is apt to bear causal relations, such as the property of being a perception of red, and the property of being an experience as of warm-colouredness—properties that the states that the reddish experience is apt to bear causal relations to have because of what those states

represent. However, instead of having redness as its content, this experience has reddishness as its content.

The need for such a state to represent a property other than redness is demonstrated by the inverted earth experiment and other motivations for internalism. We can have a state representing reddishness while having no states that in fact represent redness; the experience as of redness can come apart from states actually representing redness. In such a circumstance the standard relationships held between experiences as of redness, perceptions of redness and the like become disturbed. As such, states with qualitative content have the content they do in a way that connects to what they represent, the experience as of redness is a reddish experience by virtue of representing reddishness, but depends on other states and their properties.

This alternative preserves representationalist internalism. It sacrifices a large element of Rey's view, but the proposed modified view does work to achieve Rey's aim of showing that our mental states do not need to be individuated with regard to elements of the external world that they represent. It may seem odd that the experience as of redness represents reddishness but also is reddish, i.e., it represents a property that it has. However, it is by representing the property of reddishness that it comes to instantiate this property. (It does not actually represent an aspect of itself, instead it instantiates the property it represents: what it represents is a type, and its instantiation is a token.) Such a position seems to have what is required for a coherent, consistent, and plausible representationalist internalist functionalist view. However, certain objections can be made to it, and the question of whether Rey's project could be deemed a success needs to be further considered.

4.4 The Weak Externalist Challenge

The possibility considered above is an attempt to modify Rey's account by introducing phenomenal properties in order to explain the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content. However, even if one is able to find a viable home for phenomenal properties in such a modified version of Rey's account, this does not show that the view can adequately explain the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content in an internalist way. Rey's account and the modified view both involve functional individuation of mental states with qualitative content. The states involved in the functional relations on which individuation depends can pose a threat to internalism. If there is sufficient reason to believe that the states involved in individuating functional relations have to be individuated widely, whether in a weak or strong externalist way, this may have externalist ramifications for states with qualitative content. In this section, I argue that states with qualitative content are in fact weakly externalist, because states involved in their individuation are themselves externalistically individuated. However, I further argue that while accepting this account would be a considerable compromise for Rey, and that it fails to accord with a number of our internalist intuitions, on such an account there is nonetheless a significant sense in which states with qualitative content are narrow. Rey's aims are satisfied to a degree by this indirect dependence on factors in the external world in a way they would not be satisfied by direct dependence. States with qualitative content are not individuated in a directly externalist way, and moreover they do not represent any element in the external world, *a fortiori* do not get their content from that

represented element. As such, the modified version of Rey's view presents a significant challenge to the externalist representationalist view.

One might argue that the possibilities available to Rey introduce weak externalism. Rey's hope to the contrary is that states with qualitative content can be individuated with regard to their functional role as defined narrowly. However, if my experience as of redness is an experience as of redness (in part) because it is apt to be caused by a certain state of sensory perception that is individuation-dependent in some way on actual redness in the world, then my experience as of redness is then also individuation-dependent on actual redness in the world. Assuming that this and other such states are weakly or strongly externally individuated, then a change in the environment will change the nature of the qualitative content of the mental states an individual has. This is not a mere causal difference but an individuating one. If the sensory perception of redness depends for its individuation on actual redness, in a world such that there is not (and never has been) real redness, a perceptual state physically identical to my perception of redness would be individuated differently. This would in turn be apt to cause an experience that is individuation-dependent on this perceptual state for individuation to have different content; one could presumably not even have an experience as of redness. If this sensory perception of redness were individuated in a weakly external way, the same would be true. As Rey is attempting to develop and defend a narrow representationalism, it seems, at least at first, deeply problematic for him if weak externalism enters the account, and a case can be made that these individuating states do in fact require some degree of externalist individuation themselves.

There are two ways to defend internalism from the above possibility. One could argue that all of the states involved in any way with the individuation of qualitative content are in fact narrow. Alternatively, one could attempt to argue that despite involving states that are individuated with regard to elements in the external world, an account such as the one given above in fact achieves the goals Rey has for a narrow content representationalist account, and that with such a view Rey still challenges the externalist representationalist viewpoint.

I will first address the possibility of avoiding externalism altogether, by addressing Rey's unmodified position, and then expanding this to the proposed model that does involve phenomenal properties. On the eliminativist model, Rey hopes to limit the states relevant to the individuation of states with qualitative content to those located within specific limited subsections of the brain (modules), individuating these states along narrow functionalist lines.⁵⁰ States involved in sensory perception, such as the perception of redness and further experiential states, such as the experience as of warm-colouredness, are included in this sensory module. (Note, however, that Rey does not consider propositional attitudes to be relevant to the individuation of qualitative content. Thus these do not have to be narrow for his account of qualitative content to be narrow.) It must be examined whether these states involved in the individuation of states with qualitative content can in fact be narrow. The idea that perceptual experiences can be narrow is already under consideration in Rey's inquiry. As such, perceptual experiences involved in the individuation of other perceptual experiences pose no particular threat to internalism. An internalist functionalist

⁵⁰ Rey, 1998, p. 451. While there is more to a definition of modularity than has been given here, it is unnecessary for the points at hand.

account can also plausibly be given for states involved in the sensory process such as the perception of redness. This account will be in terms of states involved in causal processes such as those involved in seeing, perhaps starting with stimulation of the cornea. These states will be causally dependent on elements of the external world, but, Rey can maintain, not individually dependent on those elements.

It seems to be a viable option to be an internalist about the states that are supposed to individuate qualitative content on Rey's unmodified account, excepting, of course, the problem Levine identifies. However, the same may not be the case when one introduces phenomenal properties in response to Levine's objection. Introducing phenomenal properties provides a place to look for an explanation of the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content. However, merely introducing phenomenal properties does not comprise the entirety of such an explanation. The nature of phenomenal properties is essential to such an account. On the possibility proposed above, phenomenal properties are properties of a state with qualitative content that they have in virtue of the relations it holds with other states and their properties. Phenomenal properties arise out of narrow functional relations. We must explore whether or not the states that individuate states with qualitative content are able to account for phenomenal properties that, in turn, are able to account for the substantiality and determinacy of qualitative content. Rey's unmodified view is problematic as he expects qualitative content to exist in a vacuum, devoid of anything to give it substantiality and determinacy. However, introducing functionally defined phenomenal properties does not necessarily help to fill this vacuum. On such an account, properties such as reddishness and colouredishness actually exist. However,

they are merely different properties arising out of states having different functional roles. The relationship between these properties is as mysterious as the perceived relationship between them on an account where they do not in fact exist. An explanation of substantiality and determinacy is not given, and there does not seem to be a place even to look for one on such an account. The alternative, however, is a weak externalist one: that genuine properties in the external world make it possible for substantial, determinate qualitative content to exist, either directly or indirectly. On such an account reddishness would seem to be a type of colouredness because redness is in fact a type of colouredness. Given this problem, one could choose to reject the functionalist account of phenomenal properties, and perhaps introduce some ontologically distinct, irreducible phenomenal property. Alternatively, one could accept a version of weak externalism. To remain as close to Rey's intent as possible, and to leave some room for qualitative content to be in a limited sense narrow, the best possibility is that qualitative content continues to be individuated along functionalist lines, and it is merely relations to other mental states or to phenomenal properties that makes qualitative content substantial and determinate. Adopting this view is a large compromise, and a version of weak externalism.

Let us turn to the second way to respond to the accusation that the modified version of Rey's view is prey to weak externalism. One can argue that regardless of whether states with qualitative content are individuated in a way that eventually depends on the environment, they are close enough to narrow to satisfy Rey. States with qualitative content are after all not individuated directly in terms of anything in the external world: instead they are individuated with regard to other mental states or

to phenomenal properties, which are something existing within an individual. Weak externalism apparently must enter the theory at some point, as has been argued above. The proposed modification illustrates how this could occur. However, the fact that weak externalism must enter the proposed modified account need not be devastating to Rey's project. Weak externalism is actually a compromise between strong externalism and internalism. Weak externalists are in a sense warranted to call states that are individuated without any direct connection to the external world "narrow". States with qualitative content can be narrow in this limited sense of the term.

The question of whether Rey's account succeeds becomes a question of whether narrow content in the limited sense available to a weak externalist is sufficient for Rey. This in turn depends on his motivations for internalism. From the perspective of someone who is hoping to satisfy various intuitions about content by being an internalist, this account does not succeed on the whole. However, Rey's goal of demonstrating the possibility of a narrow content representationalism is fulfilled, depending on the understanding of narrow content. I will briefly turn to various intuitions that support internalism and then show in what way the modified version of Rey's account can be thought of as a success. If he were attempting to create a theory that satisfies intuitions about internalism, his project does not succeed. However, I take him to be challenging accepted views on the relationship between externalism and representationalism, and in this he does succeed.

A view that admits of weak externalism is incompatible with the brain-in-the-vat intuition. The external environment does matter to the individuation of states with qualitative content. Even more strongly, for the weak externalist, in order for there to

be narrow content there must be contentful states with wide content. Thus a brain in a vat could not have narrow content mental states because it could not have wide content ones. Likewise, the internalist intuition about the inverted earth case does not apply in this modified version of Rey's account that includes weak externalism. The effects of the external environment on the individuating states will prove problematic. The states relevant to individuating states with qualitative content will in fact be different. However, this account does leave one intuition satisfied: the intuition that what matters to individuating my states with qualitative content is something internal to me. If one is concerned that my mental states are somehow not present to me, but out in the external world, this fear is to a degree assuaged by the weak externalist. What matters for the individuation of my mental states is within me, but the external environment is nonetheless relevant. This modified version of Rey's account thus coincides with intuition only in a very limited way.

Yet Rey's project, at least in *A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience*, is to show that there can be narrow representationalism. Externalist representationalists tend to assume that states must be individuated in terms of what they represent, and that those represented things must be elements in the external world. Rey argues instead that states with qualitative content are in fact individuated with respect to their functional role and do not have to represent anything real at all. The modified view that I propose for Rey does maintain that there are real phenomenal properties. However, these states are nonetheless in an important sense narrow. Weak externalism does enter the view, but states with qualitative content do not have the content they have due to elements they represent in the

external world, as externalist representationalists maintain. What matters for the individuation of states with qualitative content is located internally to an individual, though there are nonetheless individuating connections to the external world. The modified position diverges from Rey's considerably, but does seem to show that there can be "narrow representationalism" in an important sense of the term.

Conclusion

If Rey were to choose to sacrifice his eliminativist view in response to Levine's challenges, the natural view for him to adopt to preserve as much of the rest of his position as possible is the functionalist position explored above. However, this position appears to require weak externalism. It seems that a functionalist internalist type account of phenomenal properties is unsatisfying for the same reasons that an account without phenomenal properties is unsatisfying, unless the external world is somehow relevant to individuation. Unless it is, such an account provides no acceptable source for an answer as to the origins of the determinacy and substantiality of qualitative content. Yet including weak externalism into the account need not prove devastating for Rey. While the account fails to satisfy a number of internalist intuitions, it nonetheless is a case for narrow representationalism of a significant type.

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