

Particular Thoughts & Singular Thought

A long-standing theme in discussion of perception and thought has been that our primary cognitive contact with individual objects and events in the world derives from our perceptual contact with them.¹ When I look at a duck in front of me, I am not merely presented with the fact that there is at least one duck in the area, rather I seem to be presented with *this* thing (as one might put it from my perspective) in front of me, which looks to me to be a duck. Furthermore, such a perception would seem to put me in a position not merely to make the existential judgement that there is some duck or other present, but rather to make a singular, demonstrative judgement, that *that* is an duck. My grounds for an existential judgement in this case derives from my apprehension of the demonstrative thought and not vice versa.

The cognitive role of experience is also mirrored in its phenomenology: that I am presented with a particular rubber duck, or a particular event of, say, the duck coming off the production line, is reflected in how things now visually appear to me. It looks to me as if there is a particular object before me, or that some given unrepeatable event is occurring. Hence we should expect a theory of sensory experience which aims to give an adequate account of phenomenology to accommodate and explain how such experience can indeed be particular in character.

An *Intentional Theory of Perception* (as I shall use this phrase) seeks to explain aspects of the phenomenal character of our perceptual experience in terms of the experience's possession of representational properties or, in other words, through its possession of an intentional content. On such a view, an experience's having the phenomenal properties it does (at least, with respect to those aspects of it directed at the external world) is not constitutively dependent on any object, event, or property-instance which the experience presents to the subject. One's experience would be just the way it is, presenting to one just the kind of state of affairs it does, whether or

1. This is a notable theme of (Strawson 1959), Chapter One. But one can trace it back even to Moore's early discussions of perception and judgement, for example (Moore 1922).

not such a state of affairs genuinely obtained and was perceived. The phenomenal character of the experience is constituted or determined by the representational properties themselves, which we pick out by reference to what they represent, and is not constituted by the objects represented. An intentional theory of perception exploits this supposed independence of experience from its subject matter in accounting for the possibility of hallucination. That is to say, an intentional theory of perception is committed to three claims: a.) that our sensory experiences possess intentional properties; b.) that at least some phenomenal aspects of experience, namely those which relate to the objects of perception, are to be explained by those intentional properties; and c.) the same account is to be given of veridical perception and perfectly matching hallucination by appeal to their common possession of the same intentional properties.²

However, the phenomenon with which we started, the particularity of sensory experience, poses a fundamental challenge to intentional theories of perception. According to one popular conception of thought and representation, associated in particular with Gareth Evans and John McDowell, where an intentional content is directed on a particular object or event and is 'singular', such a content is 'object-dependent': one can think thoughts of this kind only where an appropriate object to be thought about actually exists.³ Since hallucinations are taken to be paradigm examples of the absence of any such candidate object of reference, object-dependent accounts of intentional content will ascribe no intentional content to hallucinations. Given this assumption, an intentional theory of sensory experience faces a dilemma: either to reject the particularity of experience and thereby to give up the pretension of explaining the phenomenal character of experience in terms of intentional content; or to embrace the singularity of such content and thereby to forsake the motivation of giving a common account of both perception and hallucination. Hence, one might think that proper attention to the particularity of experience offers us a motivation for embracing what has come to be called a disjunctive conception of sensory experience: the denial that we can give a common account of perception and hallucination.⁴

2. For advocates of such theories see, for example, (Harman 1990), (Tye 1995), (Burge 1986). Endorsing an intentional theory of this form is consistent with claiming that there are also sensational aspects to experience (see Peacocke 1983). We can call a theory a 'pure intentional theory' which seeks to explain all aspects of phenomenal character by reference to intentional content; Harman and Tye argue for such pure intentional theories.

Though McDowell ascribes intentional content to experience, see (McDowell 1994) in particular, he does not count as an intentional theorist of perception in the terms I use here, since he is not motivated to give a common account of perception and hallucination.

3. This simplifies matters with respect to Evans who insists on the *variety* of reference—he also wants to allow for the existence of non-object-dependent, non-Russellian modes of reference using descriptive names. This would not apply to the case of perceptual demonstrative reference, however.

The route to solving this problem takes us through another question about the particularity of experience concerning identical twins. The ambition of intentional approaches, as I have glossed them above, is to explain sameness and difference in phenomenal character of experience in terms of the intentional contents that experiences possess. So two experiences with the same intentional content should be taken to be phenomenologically the same, at least with respect to those aspects explicable in intentional terms, and two experiences which are phenomenologically the same in intentional aspect should possess the same contents. But now when one perceives identical twins, the experience of each alone can be phenomenologically indistinguishable from the experience of the other. This is not merely a matter of not being able to note the difference between the two: rather what makes one twin the individual it is and not the other need not be perceptually detectable, so the properties experientially present in both cases are the same. But if the two experiences are phenomenologically the same, then presumably they must possess the same intentional content. Yet each of the experiences presents a distinct individual and so any content in common between the experiences must be object-independent. The arguments against reconciling intentional theories with the particularity of experience seem multiple. But in fact the solution to this problem shows the way to answering our initial challenge.

In the first section of the paper, I outline the doctrine of object dependence for singular thought and isolate the key element which presents the problem for intentional theories of perception. In the second, we review the question of indiscriminable twins. In the third section I explain how the theory can embrace the conclusion that experiences of identical twins have the same phenomenal character without having to deny that individual experiences have particular objects as part of their phenomenal nature. This leads us to distinguish between those aspects of a psychological episode which it essentially has in common with any other episode of fundamentally the same kind, and those aspects of it which are proprietary just as an individual unrepeatable event. Discussion of the issues raised by identical twins shows how to answer our initial problem of reconciling the particularity of experience with the intentional theorist's need to appeal to object-independent content. In the closing section of the paper, I then draw out some of the consequences of this approach to the metaphysics of contentful psychological episodes through contrasting the model elaborated here with Evans's own view of experience which is in sharp contrast to his view of singular thought.

4. Just such a challenge can be found in (McDowell 1986), though not explicitly directed at intentional theories of perception. It seems to be offered as one of the main motivations for disjunctivism about perception in (Snowdon 1990), and is suggested by (Soteriou 2000).

1. In *The Varieties of Reference*, Gareth Evans introduces what he there calls ‘Russellian’ thoughts, but what have come to be known by others as ‘object-dependent’ thoughts. Evans defines Russellian thought so:

A thought is Russellian if it is of such a kind that it simply could not exist in the absence of the object or objects which it is about.⁵

McDowell discusses the same idea in his paper ‘Truth-Value Gaps’ and, in introducing it, draws an immediate consequence:

...a singular thought is a thought that would not be available to be thought or expressed if the relevant object, or objects, did not exist. It follows that if one utters a sentence of the relevant sort, containing a singular term that, in that utterance, lacks a denotation, then one expresses no thought at all; consequently neither a truth nor a falsehood.⁶

That Evans himself also endorses this consequence is reflected in the following passage later in the book:

Consequently, demonstrative thoughts about objects, like ‘here’-thoughts, are Russellian. If there is no one object with which the subject is in fact in informational ‘contact’—if he is hallucinating, or if several different objects succeed each other without his noticing—then he has no Idea-of-a-particular object, and hence no thought. His demonstrative thought about a particular object relies upon the fact of an informational connection of a certain kind, not upon the thought or idea of that connection; and hence it is unconstruable, if there is no object with which he is thus connected.⁷

So we have here two aspects to the idea of Russellian or object-dependent thought: First, that the existence of a thought-content, and hence the existence of an episode of thinking that content, is constitutively dependent on the existence of the object or objects that the thought-content is about;⁸ second, that where we have a case putatively of this kind but in which no appropriate object of thought is present, then the subject thinks no thought at all.

The second claim places an emphasis on what one has to say about the ‘empty’ case, where no appropriate object is present, rather than on any feature of the central case where there is an object. And that has caused a certain amount of discussion about psychological states present in the case of hallucination.⁹ In some passages, Evans appears to commit himself to the view that there is no episode of thinking in the empty case, in others what he has to say is ambivalent; the same is true of McDowell in his com-

5.(Evans 1982), p.71.

6. (McDowell 1982), p. 204 in reprint.

7. (Evans 1982), p.173.

8.It seems to me as plausible to put the thesis just in terms of the conditions for the existence of episodes of thought rather than the existence conditions for the contents of those thoughts (we could allow that Russellian thought-contents existed in all worlds but were inaccessible to thought in worlds where the object thought about does not exist). However Evans defines it first in terms of condition for existence of the thought-content.

9. Here see (Noonan 1993), (Segal 1989) and (Carruthers 1987) for an extensive discussion.

mentaries on Evans.¹⁰ For our purposes here, however, it is more important to focus on the commitments which concern only the case in which an appropriate object is present and hence to bracket assessment of what one says about the empty case, and whether the claim made about cases in which the thought depends on an object really does have the consequence McDowell claims it does for the empty case.

We should then define the notion of object dependence so. A proposition or thought content is *object-dependent* where the thought content concerns a given object and a mental state or episode which has the thought content in question as its content could only occur given the existence of the object being referred to or thought about. Certainly no such thought content could then be entertained in a case of hallucination as normally conceived, where no appropriate candidate for the object of thought exists. Whether that should mean that no thought content at all could then be entertained, and in turn whether that means that no mental state or episode could then be occurring is a further matter.

Correlative to the idea of object dependence, we might also define a notion of *object-involvingness* for the mental states or episodes which have such contents. Let us say that a mental state or episode is object-involving where a state or episode of that very kind could only occur given the existence of a suitable object for the state or episode to be related to. In the absence of such an object, then there will be no instance of that mental kind. We can interpret Evans's and McDowell's position here to be that acceptance of object dependence for content leads also directly to acceptance of object-involvingness for mental episodes and states. Against this, I shall argue in this paper that while the connection between object dependence and object involvingness holds for a wide range of thought contents, the defender of an intentional theory of perception will insist that there are some states of mind which have an object-dependent truth condition associated with them but which are not object-involving.

To see how this possibility can arise, we need to notice a distinction among the kinds of capacities we have for thinking about objects. Evans's

10. Cf. (Evans 1982), on pp.45-6 he states, 'It is not part of this proposal that his mind is wholly vacant; images and words may clearly pass through it, and various ancillary thoughts may even occur to him'; and on p. 71 the stress is simply on the claim that no thought of the Russellian kind could be had in the absence of an object, in contrast to the passage on p.173. In an appendix to Ch.6, the authorship of which may be more due to McDowell as editor than the text proper, it is claimed 'It is a consequence of the realism with which we have just mentioned that when a person hallucinates, so that it appears to him that he is confronting, say, a bus, then, whether or not he is taken in by the appearances, there is literally nothing before his mind,' pp. 199-200. However, in McDowell's own commentary on this in (McDowell 1986), he writes, '[a subject] may think that there is a singular thought at, so to speak, a certain position in his internal organization although there is really nothing precisely there.' Continued in footnote 17: 'Nothing precisely there; of course there may be all sorts of things in the vicinity' (p. 145). The discussion in the footnote seeks to rebut a suggestion of Blackburn's in (Blackburn 1984), Ch. 9, that Evans would be committed to the view that the mind is 'empty' or has a 'void' in the hallucinatory case.

talk of 'Ideas' is intended to direct our attention to the fact that we have capacities for thinking about objects which underlie our capacities for entertaining whole thought contents. For our purposes we need to focus on the case of *perceptual demonstrative* thoughts and those ways of thinking about objects which are essentially tied to our perceptual encounters with objects. Such capacities might be contrasted with those we have for thinking about objects in their absence, as when reading a newspaper account of someone's endeavours, or simply wondering what an absent friend may now be doing. Here the idea of a capacity of thought for an individual is taken to be (in part) individuated by the object thought about: capacities to think about distinct individuals must be distinct capacities. Yet they are also conceived of as more fine-grained than capacities which would be counted as the same or different solely by reference to the objects they are capacities to think of: we are to contrast perceptually demonstrative capacities to think about individuals tied to current perceptual contact with them, with capacities grounded simply in one's knowledge of those individuals which can persist beyond any momentary encounter.

One can think of the latter sort of capacities as what one might call *standing* capacities: a thinker possesses such a capacity over time and is capable of exercising the very same capacity on different occasions. The possession of such a capacity reflects the fact that a thinker can entertain the very same thought content on different occasions of thinking even where thought content is individuated more finely than by appeal to the objects, events and properties that it concerns.

In the case of demonstrative thoughts, however, we need to recognise the presence of more than any such standing capacities for thinking about objects. We need to note the possibility of someone on a given occasion being capable of thinking about a particular object or event just given the circumstances present in that particular situation. Such an ability or capacity to think about a given object in a particular circumstance should be thought of as a one-off, unrepeatable capacity: an episodic capacity. If such a capacity arises on a given occasion, no other thinking, even by that very same thinker would involve the very same episodic capacity, even if it concerned the very same individual.

Such episodic capacities are plausibly attributed only where there is a corresponding standing capacity. We would be reluctant to attribute to a subject the capacity to make demonstrative judgements, unless he or she was able to make more than one such judgement. Unlike the standing capacities for thought about individuals introduced above, these standing capacities for demonstrative thought are not to be thought of as abilities to think (repeatedly) about some given individual item, but might rather be thought of as capacities to think about whatever is suitably placed when the appropriate occasioning event for the capacity occurs. That is, as an

object-independent capacity to acquire the episodic capacity to think about an object when suitably placed on a given occasion.

This is to put the basic contrast in very abstract terms. We can make it more concrete with examples. Suppose then that I have a way of thinking about Ken Livingstone, as reflected in the way that I can recognise his face, and respond to uses of his name in news reports, gossip columns and the like to associate with the history of one given individual. If I have such a capacity, we will appeal to it to explain how different occasions of thinking what I would express by, 'Ken Livingstone never travels on the No. 19 bus' can all be expressions of the very same thought content. Contrast this with a case of demonstrative thought, where one's accidental encounter with one object rather than another explains which object it is one is thinking about. For example, think of a production line at a rubber-duck factory. In judging what I express with the words, 'Now that's yellow!' pointing in the direction of the first duck in line, call it 'Huey', the thought I entertain is one available to me because Huey is peculiarly visually salient to me at that time. The situation allows me to exploit a general capacity I have for forming a capacity related to whatever is perceptually salient at a time in making the judgement. But had circumstances been slightly different, and another, indistinguishable duck come off the line at that moment, and not Huey, then I would have thought about the other duck, and not Huey. The background standing capacity for thinking about a perceptually salient object would have been operative in the same way, but a different episodic capacity would have been engaged.

Now, Evans's and McDowell's conception of object-dependent thought and correspondingly object-involving psychological states goes neatly with the former example and the idea of standing capacities for thinking about particular individuals. Parallel to the modal intuitions which may convince us that the truth conditions of the judgements are object-dependent, intuitions about whether someone is thinking the same thing on different occasions or at different times should convince us that what singles out different occasions of thinking as relevantly of the same kind will just be that they are all exercises of the same standing capacity to think about Ken Livingstone in a given manner. In that case, no thinking which concerned some other entity alone and did not concern Ken Livingstone could really be of the same kind. There would be no room, then, to suppose that the thoughts I would have been entertaining had Ken Livingstone not been known to me but only some double with the same name would have been cases of thinking in just the same way, exploiting the very same capacities for thought.

But the same conclusion is really not forced on us for perceptual demonstrative thoughts, given the role of episodic capacities for thought. The very object I happen to be perceiving at this one time, Huey, is all that

is relevant to the question whether my thoughts are true and under what conditions they would be true. But if this is a one-off capacity to think about Huey, then there is no reason to think that any other distinct episode of thinking must involve the very same capacity for thinking about Huey, as opposed to the general capacity for thinking about whatever is salient to one. So there is no license to judge that episodes of thought are of exactly the same kind just because they concern Huey presented in a certain manner. Rather, if we are to group different episodes of thinking together as of the same kind when focusing on perceptually grounded judgements, then it is plausible to suppose that episodes of thinking which concern different objects, but similarly presented, should be counted together. If this is right, then we see the need to make room for truth conditions of thought episodes which are tied to the objects the thoughts are about, yet for which we do not get object-involving mental states or episodes as we have defined above.

This gives the general framework which we will use below to expand on and then address the problems facing the intentional theory of perception. If perceptual experiences are to be treated analogously to episodes of thinking, then the model appropriate would arguably be that of perceptual demonstrative thought. If we can make sense of the latter as relating to objects without being object-dependent, then we can show how the intentional theorist can allow for the particularity of experience without giving up on the pretension of explaining hallucinatory experience in the same terms as perceptual experience. The point can be made more forcibly once we look at the case of perceiving indiscriminable twins and the grounds that some have found in this for supposing the content of experience to be existentially general in form.

2. The relevance of perceptually indiscriminable twins to the question whether experience can have a particular or object-involving content has been raised before. Colin McGinn and Martin Davies have both argued that the content of perceptual experience must be general on just this ground

...when we are describing the content of an experience we should not make singular reference to the object of the experience...In fact it seems right to uphold a stronger thesis about experiential content: that an accurate description of the phenomenological content of experience will employ only general terms to specify how the experience represents the world.¹¹

Davies, who endorses this view, offers the following brief argument in its favour:

...in the case of perceptual content, it is plausible that if two objects are genuinely indistinguishable for a subject, then a perceptual experience of the

11. (McGinn 1982a), p.39.

one has the same content as a perceptual experience of the other. The source of this plausibility is the thought that the perceptual content of experience is a phenomenal notion: perceptual content is a matter of how the world seems to the experienter... If perceptual content is, in this sense, “phenomenological content”...then, where there is no phenomenological difference for the subject, there is no difference in perceptual content.

If perceptual content is phenomenological content then, it seems, it is not object-involving. But from this it does not follow that perceptual content is not truth conditional—not fully representational; for we can take perceptual content to be existentially quantified content. A visual experience may present the world as containing *an* object of a certain size and shape, in a certain direction, at a certain distance from the subject.¹²

As suggested above, these claims would seem to be at odds with the simple thought that our experiences ground demonstrative judgements about particular objects. As Moore was keen to stress, a glance at one’s desk may lead to the judgement, ‘*That* (directing one’s attention at one thing on one’s desktop) is an inkstand’. One is not stuck with merely the possibility of judging that there is some inkstand in the vicinity, one can pick out the very inkstand in question and make a demonstrative judgement about it. If experience makes reasonable such demonstrative judgements, surely how things are presented as being must reflect the fact that it is one particular thing rather than another that one perceives. So surely the content of the experience cannot itself be entirely general in character.

Neither McGinn nor Davies wish to deny that our experiences prompt, and justify, singular judgements about particular objects. Their claim is rather that the experiences themselves lack such particularity in their content. So they would dispute the further contention that the rationalising role of experience requires that it have a content matching the singular demonstrative judgement that issues from it.

Leave that issue to one side. For we can instead press the question in terms of how the phenomenal character of our experience relates to our intuitions about whether the scene before us is presented correctly or illusorily. It is arguable that assessing experience in this way requires us to take into account which object is being presented to the subject, and this fact cannot properly be accommodated on a view on which the content of experience is purely general.

Now in defence of the idea that the content of experience is purely general, some have appealed to the possibility of ‘veridical hallucinations’. If I have the visual hallucination of an orange on the table in front of me, my experience may match how things are before me without thereby being a perception. Someone may simply place an appropriately sized orange on the table without thereby restoring my sight. In the relevant sense of ve-

12. (Davies 1992), pp.25-6.

ridicality here we appeal solely to a general content: that there should be some orange or other on the table before the subject if his experience is veridical.¹³

But this does not exhaust all of the judgements we are prepared to make about the veridicality of experience. We also make judgements about one's misperceiving an object to be a certain way, and that the object is presented to one as being a way that it is not. Consider, for example, a slight modification of a Gricean example. One views a scene through a rose-tinted prism, under slightly unusual lighting. Directly ahead of one is a pink candle. A white candle is placed to the right of the pink candle. Intuitively, in this case one sees the white candle, although it looks to one as if there is a pink candle before one. So far, in parallel with the case of veridical hallucination, we can judge this to be a misperception of one object while also being a veridical experience with respect to how one's environment is represented. But now suppose that we change the situation somewhat and bleach out the coloured light. It now looks to one as if there is a white candle before one. Where the experience was veridical before, it is now illusory: for it is as if there is a white candle before one when in fact there is a pink one. On the other hand, we can also recognise a sense in which the experience is also now more accurate. In the first example it misrepresents the location and colour of a candle, now it merely misrepresents its location. These assessments of veridicality require reference to the particular object of perception, and not just the kind of state of affairs in the subject's environment.

A similar moral can be drawn from cases involving perception over time. Suppose one is staring at a thin piece of paper with a blue cross on it. Unbeknownst to one, there is in fact a densely packed ream of paper crosses before one, and each in turn is imperceptibly dissolving. Over a period of time it will look to one as if there continues to be a blue cross before one. This is in fact correct, for throughout the period there is a blue cross there, albeit there is no one blue cross which one continues to see. There is some inclination here to think of the experience as involving an illusion of persistence. But unless we bring in reference to some particular thing we have no way of distinguishing this illusory course of experience from a veridical case in which one sees just one cross over time.¹⁴

Neither example is conclusive. For instance, it would be open to McGinn and Davies to grant that we can make these judgements about the accuracy of experience but then insist that in doing so we import considerations which are external to the phenomenological character of the experi-

13. Such thoughts are prompted by Grice's famous discussion of the causal theory of perception, (Grice 1961).

14. Cf. here also (Soteriou 2000) for arguments for the particularity of the character of experience, and why an intentional theory of perception should be committed to this.

ence. To make such an assessment of one's experience, it might be claimed, goes beyond the phenomenal character and appeals to causal considerations about which is the object of perception, a question which depends on matters external to phenomenology.

I'm not too concerned to settle the merits of this debate here.¹⁵ Whether we can conclusively show that experience has the relevant phenomenological particularity, one would be mistaken to think that it is simply obvious that its character is existentially general in form. So there is as much interest in focusing on the arguments that McGinn and Davies can offer in favour of their interpretation of experience. Must the intentionalist commit to the view that experience is general in its content, given that there is at least some *prima facie* evidence to the contrary? This leads us back to Davies's argument for his conclusion.

It is clear that we can perceive distinct but qualitatively identical objects. Distinct objects can possess the very same visible properties; two objects can look exactly the same as each other. Such objects are visually indistinguishable. Their distinct identities may be detectable by other means but not by simply looking. For example, if one was presented consecutively with two rubber ducks off the same production line, one might be unable to tell from inspecting each in turn which of the two it was: whether one had been given the same duck twice, or viewed a different duck on each occasion. In this case not only would the two objects be visually indistinguishable, but the two experiences of the objects would be indistinguishable for their subject through introspection of them. Moreover, and this does not simply follow from the former claim, we would be inclined to say that the experiences are the same in phenomenal, or qualitative, character. Both of the experiences are experiences of an object looking duck-shaped and yellow-tinged in the region of space before the subject. So there is no difference in how the objects perceived are presented as being.

None of this, I take it, is open to dispute. But Davies's reasoning contains two further moves in order to arrive at his conclusion that the content of both experiences is general in form. And each of these moves is open to question. The first involves Davies's claim that, given that the two experiences are phenomenally the same, their contents must be the same, since the content of experience is 'phenomenological content'. The second move is the claim that if the contents of the two experiences are the same,

15. I also ignore the attempt to explain these phenomena in terms of a descriptive condition picking out the object of perception as the cause of the experience—see (Searle 1983) for the proposal, and (Burge 1993) and (Soteriou 2000) for scepticism about its merits.

For a rather different take on the relation between experience and demonstrative judgement see (Campbell 1997), and for dissent, my reply in the same volume.

then that content must be general in form. We need to consider each in more detail.

In support of the first move, one might claim that the phenomenology or qualitative character of an experience is nothing more than its similarities or differences from some other experience. Hence if two experiences are exactly alike in their qualitative character, as the reasoning above appears to concede, then any difference between them must be a difference in some non-phenomenological aspect. So, any notion of content which is intended to capture the sameness or difference of the two experiences should be attributable to both, since they are qualitatively alike.

On at least one conception of experience, this conclusion is unavoidable. According to an 'adverbialist' conception of experience, the qualitative character of experience is conceived simply as a matter of the presence of certain qualia or qualities. To experience a red square, say, is to experience in a certain determinate manner: redly-coincidingly-with-squarely. An understanding of what it is for one's experience to be so requires us to make no appeal beyond the ways or manners in which one experiences, where we are to think of that as the subject or the experience instantiating some simple mental quality. Our ascriptions of experience, of course, make reference to the objects or putative objects of experience, and so appear relational, but for an adverbialist this reflects the fact that in order to find terms rich enough to express the variation in character we may make reference to the typical causes of such experience.¹⁶ On such a conception of experience, it is possible, in principle at least, for distinct sensory episodes to possess the same qualia. And what it is for experiences to be qualitatively the same or different is simply for them to share or differ in the qualia they have. So there can be no room, on this conception, for experiences to differ in their phenomenology apart from sharing or failing to share such qualia. Such a conception of experience would endorse the move from qualitative identity of the two sensory episodes to the claim that any difference between them would have to be non-phenomenological, since all phenomenology could be would be something qualitative and hence general in form.

Elsewhere I have laboured the inadequacies of any such conception of the phenomenal character of experience.¹⁷ What is distinctive of experience, and central to our understanding of the problems of perception, is that in having an experience, a subject is presented with a particular subject matter; how things are in some part of the subject's body or environment is given to him or her in having the experience. We cannot understand what an experience is like independent of its subject matter. The phenomenal nature of a given experience is a matter of what is pre-

16. For an example of such adverbialism see (Tye 1984).

17. See (Martin 1998).

sented to the subject and the manner in which it is presented, and the similarities or differences among experiences are a matter of similarity or difference among these complex phenomenal natures. So similarity and difference of experiences can be just a matter of similarity or difference of their subject matter.¹⁸ Once we appeal to the distinction between the subject matter of an experience (the objects and qualities as presented to the subject in so experiencing) and the qualitative characteristics of the experience itself, then the conclusion drawn above by the adverbialist no longer follows from our assumptions.

Moreover, intentional approaches to perception want to acknowledge precisely the aspect of experience highlighted above: that the phenomenal nature of experience is, at least in part, the presentation of a subject matter. After all, the need for appeal to intentional content is precisely to bring out the connection between what an experience is like and the mind-independent entities putatively present to a subject even in a case of hallucination. So an intentional theorist of perception ought to reject the adverbialist conception of experience and so Davies cannot appeal to that conception of qualitative similarity of experience in support of his reasoning against an intentionalist.

We can not only question the reasons for making the move. In addition, we can offer positive reason to reject it. For one may claim that what it takes for an entity to be an aspect of the phenomenology of an experience is just that it be among the presented elements of that particular episode. Such an experience could be entirely qualitatively identical with another experience involving a distinct object and yet still differ in its phenomenal nature solely in this respect. In this way, the one experience of one rubber duck, of Huey, say, may be the presentation of that very toy, while the experience of the other rubber duck, Dewey is the presentation of the other toy. There is a difference between the two experiences—that is a difference between the two particular unrepeatable events—namely that the one is the presentation of one object and the other the presentation of another object. And this difference between them is quite consistent with there being no qualitative difference between the two experiences. For, of course, to look at them as *qualitatively* the same or different is precisely to abstract away from any particulars involved in either situation. One is merely asking what qualities the two have in common. Both experiences are presentings of yellow, duck-shaped objects.

Davies's opponent can insist that the difference in content between the two experiences shows up only in the differences between the particular experiential episodes and not in the phenomenal properties the episodes

18. Note the qualification 'can be': it is quite consistent with the points made here that there is more to the phenomenal character of an experience than its subject matter, so that two experiences which share a subject matter may nonetheless be phenomenologically different from each other.

share. So there can be a difference in content between two phenomenally identical experiences without that difference having to be non-phenomenological.

This is, I suggest, sufficient to block Davies's argument as given. We have blocked the first move. But the argument is worth exploring further, nonetheless. Can we find further justification behind Davies's explicit words in order to press the argument on? Elsewhere, I've explored and rejected arguments based on the idea that the ascription of content here is constrained by the subject's powers of discrimination.¹⁹ But there is a deeper and more interesting set of considerations, or so I shall argue, which would bolster Davies's position here and which seem to operate implicitly in much of the discussion of the content of utterances and thoughts.

Our aim is to reconcile the claim that two experiences of distinct objects could be phenomenologically the same with the claim that particulars should figure in the phenomenal character of an experience. To do this we suggested that particular objects are relevant to the phenomenal nature of a particular episode of experiencing on its own, rather than to the phenomenal character of the experience which it would share with distinct experiences of the same kind. When we ask whether two experiences are phenomenally the same or different, we abstract away from any concern with which particular object or event is being apprehended. We are solely interested in whether objects or events of a certain kind were presented to the subject. Reconciling the two claims in this way requires us to rely on a contrast between the phenomenal nature of individual experiential events and the phenomenal character they share with other experiences of the same kind. But can we appeal to this contrast if we also assume that the phenomenology of experience is determined by its intentional content?

For, one might claim, the commonest conception of psychological content is as that which individuates psychological states and divides experiences into fundamental categories or kinds. Part of the import of Frege's contrast between thought as objective and ideas as subjective seems to be to draw out the role of thought in classifying distinct episodes or states of thinking into common kinds. Hence we may conceive of content as objective in being potentially the object of distinct psychological episodes. If this is how we are to conceive of content, as essentially shareable across episodes of thinking or experiencing, then if two psychological states differ in their contents, they must be fundamentally of different kinds; while if they are the same, then they must have the same content. In general, sameness and difference among intentional states will be a function of the content of

19. (Martin 1997).

those states and the attitude the subject takes towards that content in being in that state.²⁰

Just such principles are at work in the debate between, for example, Evans and Perry on Fregean thought. Perry, following Kaplan's work on demonstratives and indexicals, insists that there are two notions of content: one, *psychological role*, which goes with cognitive states; and the other, *propositional content*, which has truth conditions. For Perry, it is clear that two agents, Barry and Harry, who both think, 'I am hungry' have relevantly the same psychological episodes with respect to psychological explanation, although the truth conditions of their thoughts differ. At the same time, if it is Barry who says, 'I am hungry', then the thought he expresses has the same truth conditions as my utterance then of 'Barry is hungry', even though the thinking of that needn't have the same psychological role as the first-personal thought. So Barry and Harry are in states with the same content with respect to psychological role, although the truth conditions of the two states differ. According to Perry, truth-conditional content alone would treat as alike cases which ought to be seen as different, and distinguish cases which are relevantly the same. It is psychological role which individuates psychological states, and hence Frege was just confused to think that any notion of content could both play the individuating role and be a bearer of truth values.²¹

In contrast, Evans wishes to work with a single notion of content which is truth-conditional but more fine-grained than Perry's conception of truth conditions. On Evans's view there is an important similarity between the two agents: they are thinking similar thoughts. But nonetheless there is an important difference between the two situations and hence the thoughts are nonetheless distinct because they concern different individuals and that is fundamental to psychological explanation. So, according to Evans, it is this fine-grained notion of content which is needed to delimit the fundamental similarities and differences among psychological states. There is both a difference between the two propositions about Barry, since entertaining them involves different modes of thinking about Barry, and differences between Barry's and Harry's thoughts, since they are thinking of different things.

At one level, one might think that Perry's position is simply a variant of Evans's position, and *vice versa*. We can model the notions of content that each uses by logical construction from the notion of content that the other uses. Evans's Fregean contents could be treated as ordered pairs of Perry's truth-conditional content and his psychological roles; while Perry's psychological roles can be treated as one set of equivalence classes of Fregean

20. For one discussion of this role of content see (Peacocke 1992), Ch. 5. For a general critique of these assumptions about content see (Travis 1994) and (Travis 1998).

21. (Perry 1993).

contents, and its truth conditions as a different set of equivalence classes of those contents. To pinpoint what is at issue here we need to think in terms of which notion of content is most fundamental to giving an account of the kind of thing these psychological states are: what is essential to how they differ or are the same? That is just to assume that there is a notion of content which matches these questions, and so Perry and Evans differ about which kind of content should play that individuating role. This deep issue between them consists of a disagreement about what is fundamental to psychological explanation and psychological kinds.

In the case of interest to us, given an assumption that there is such a notion of content for the case of sensory experiences, the question becomes, 'Which experiences should we treat as of the same fundamental kind?'. Those which are of the same kind should be attributed the same content. Episodes of distinct fundamental kinds, with different contents, may nonetheless be similar to each other: they may fall under some more general kind. But the main question to be pursued is, 'How fine-grained, at base, does our ascription of content need to be for a given kind of experience?' To attribute distinct contents to two experiences is to treat them as being of fundamentally different kinds. Conversely, where one has independent compelling reason to treat two experiences as of exactly the same kind, then one should attribute to them the very same content.

We can reconstruct Davies's first move so. Consider three possible sensory experiences. Two of these experiences are presentations of Huey on the table in front of the perceiver, the third is a presentation of Dewey. If the presence of a different object makes for a different content, then the first two experiences may be attributed the same content, but the third experience must have a different content. So the first two experiences are similar in a way that the third is not. Now, of course, everyone should grant that there is a similarity which the first two have but which the third lacks, for example being caused by Huey as opposed to being caused by Dewey. The point at issue is whether that can be a difference in the phenomenal kind, the phenomenal character, of the experience. Does the fact that a different object is perceived make a difference to the kind of experiential event one is having? After all, not all properties that an event has need thereby be aspects of the phenomenology of that event. And here Davies can simply point out that our intuition is that, given the perceptual indistinguishability of Huey and Dewey, the way things are presented in all three cases must just be the same. There does not seem to be anything about what the first experience is like which allies it more closely with the second than with the third experience.

So, we might put the point so. The intuitions that we already have about sameness and difference of sensory episodes leads us to treat all three experiences as of the same kind, and not to discriminate the first two

from the third. If these judgements about sameness and difference of kinds of experience are to be reflected in the contents that we ascribe to the experiences, then all three experiences should be ascribed the very same content.

Hence we seem to have restored cogency to Davies's first move, as long as we accept the general principle about the individuating role of content and the intuitions about fundamental similarity and difference among experiences. What now of Davies's second move? The claim that if the experiences have the same content when one is presented with distinct objects, then the content in question must be general.

Davies himself closes the gap by talking of the experience being 'truth conditional' and 'fully representational', but the import of these qualifications is not entirely clear. However, we might expand on them through a simple line of reasoning to this conclusion. First, assume that the correctness conditions of the experience are essential to it and the same in both cases. In the first situation, when presented with Huey, the correctness, or veridicality, of one's experience will be determined by how things are with Huey. Given that it looks to one as if there is a yellow duck-shaped object present, one's experience will be veridical just in case Huey is both duck-shaped and yellow. On the other hand, in the second situation, when presented with Dewey, whether one's experience is veridical is sensitive to how things are with Dewey, whether Dewey is duck-shaped and yellow. So neither Huey nor Dewey is essential to determining the correctness of the content but each in turn, in one of the situations but not the other, is relevant to the truth of the content. Now this pattern of relevance to truth and truth conditions is exactly what we would predict on the basis of a view which supposes that the content of an experience merely lays down a general condition which an object must meet in order to fix the correctness of that content. Huey is relevant in the first situation because in that situation Huey meets the relevant condition; while in the second situation Dewey meets the condition and hence is relevant to the correctness conditions in that situation. So, we might supplement Davies's argument simply with the thought that ascribing a general content to the experiences best explains this pattern of relevance.

However, there is an alternative to this. We could instead suggest that the correctness conditions for the experiences are not the same across both situations but are rather to be assessed in each of the contexts in which an experience occurs.²² The content of the sensory experiences, given the above argument, is context-insensitive: distinct sensory episodes which could have occurred at different times or with the presentation of distinct

22. Does this make the experiences not 'fully representational' or not 'truth conditional'? Perhaps that is what Davies has in mind, but there is really no reason to think that a contextually assigned truth condition renders a state not fully representational other than by stipulation.

objects, possess the same content. But content can be context-insensitive without its correctness conditions being so: for the content may determine a correctness condition relative to a context.

Tyler Burge recommends just such a conception of perceptual content. Burge suggests that we can specify the content of a perceptual state so:

(a') that F is G [where one indicates the relevant F, and where "that F" is not only used, but stands for the mode of indication used in the statement (or visual experience) whose truth conditions are being given].

...The Intentional content involves a demonstrative occurrence (or type individuated in terms of a demonstrative occurrence) that governs F-predication and that in fact is applied to the relevant physical object.²³

Given Burge's general approach to the semantics of demonstratives this conception assigns a truth condition involving a particular object only to given applications of the content in particular contexts. As Burge goes on to comment:

On my view, demonstrative elements—which I contrasted with conceptual elements—should be taken as primitive in mental states, or their Intentional contents. In order to have reference, demonstrative elements must be part of a particular thinker's thought or experience in a particular context... demonstrative elements contrast with conceptual elements, which have a constant reference or extension regardless of who thinks them or when they are thought.²⁴

In the one situation, when presented with Huey, the contextual factors determine that the reference of the demonstrative element of the content expressed by 'That is duck-shaped' is Huey. So in this case the truth conditions of the judgement on this application concern how things are with Huey. However, in that situation Dewey rather than Huey could have been present. Had that been so, then the reference of the demonstrative element would have been Dewey and not Huey, so the truth conditions of the judgement would have concerned Dewey and not Huey. In this way we can see the visual experience being so characterised as having a content in common to the two occasions.

This conception matches the same pattern of dependence on the objects of the experience that we had with treating the content of the experience as purely general. In contrast to that, though, it continues to treat the content as irreducibly demonstrative. So it can hold on to the pretensions that our experiences are indeed of particular objects, and provide for our singular, demonstrative judgements about them. Again we have a means of resisting Davies's and McGinn's position. This time we can refuse to make the second move.

23. (Burge 1993), p.200.

24.(Burge 1993), p.208.

But does this really save the spirit of the position that Davies is arguing against? Can't Davies hit back by reminding us that the whole point of intentionalism concerning experience is to explain the phenomenology of experience, its phenomenal nature or character, in terms of its intentional content. But now, he may insist, if the content of the experiences is the same in both cases, then their phenomenology must be the same. Although, in each context, the truth of the content depends on something different, that difference is not reflected in the phenomenal nature of the experience. After all, he may insist, it is the representational aspects of experience which are to explain its phenomenal nature. So this alternative account of content to Davies offers no alternative account of the phenomenology of experience—it no more respects the intuition that the character of a particular episode involves particular objects than does Davies's account in terms of existentially general truth conditions.

This response takes us back to the point made against Davies's first move. If we are interested in specifying the phenomenal nature of a given sensory episode as it occurs, then we should specify its content as applied in that context. That means in that situation picking out the object perceived in the relevant demonstrative way. In this way, correctly to specify what the perceiver's experience is like one needs to demonstrate the object which is in fact perceived. This aspect of the experience is not common across different occurrences of experiences with that intentional content, for in so doing we would shift the context in which the content is applied. But as things stand, with the objects so arrayed in the environment, the proper characterisation of the experience if it is a veridical perception should mention them. This is so consistent with the intentionalist's claim that the intentional content alone and not the objects perceived constitute the phenomenal character of the experience, conceived as that which can be common across different occurrences.

The underlying point here requires us to reflect on how our metaphysical commitments in the notion of content interact with our conception of sensory experiences having a subject matter. There is something inherently general in the conception of a particular episode of thought or experience having a content. Given a conception of content as something shareable across distinct episodes of thought, the having of a content will be a general attribute of each episode of thought. Once we reflect on the way in which an experience has a subject matter, the presentation of a particular scene, then we need a way of making room for the essentially or inherently particular aspects of this as well as the general attributes of experience. We need to contrast the unrepeatable aspect of its phenomenology, what we might call its *phenomenal nature*, with that it has in common with qualitatively the same experiential events, what we might call its *phenomenal character*.

A given individual event may involve one set of particular entities rather than another. But when we come to type events as falling into kinds, we abstract away from the particulars involved in the individual events and just consider the general attributes that the particulars exhibit. For example, consider someone investigating the flaws in the rubber duck manufacturing process. Perhaps a certain shape of stain is present on both Huey and Dewey as they come off the production line. We may hypothesise that there is a specific design fault, at a given stage of the process, which leads to this kind of flaw. In that case, we are concerned to treat the event of producing Huey as of the same kind as the event of producing Dewey. That the two events involve distinct particulars is irrelevant to what kind the events are. It is just the same intuition at work, I suggest, when we are moved to think of the three experiences, two of Huey and one of Dewey. That is what explains the consistency of our intuitions: that each experience has a particularity about it relating to the very objects or events apprehended; and that at the same time, the three experiences are all entirely of the same type.

An intentional theory of perceptual experience will reject the thought that the objects of perception are literally constituents of an experiential episode, because hallucinatory experiences which are taken to be of the same kind will lack any such constituents (hence it cannot be essential to this kind of experience that it has its subject matter as a constituent). Nonetheless, an intentionalist will still be moved by a concern with one's first-person perspective on experience. From that point of view, it is as if the scene before one is a constituent of the experiential event. So no articulation of what the experience is like would be adequate if it did not make mention of the particular objects and events experienced in the case of genuine perception. Hence, an intentionalist should best think that the particular phenomenal nature that a particular experiential episode has is determined just in the context in which the experience occurs.

To sum up our discussion of perceptually indiscriminable twins. We can respect the idea that distinct objects and events can be presented in phenomenally exactly the same way, and that consequently such experiences are phenomenally the same in nature. Furthermore, one can accept as a consequence of this that such experiences will share exactly the same content. This is quite consistent with supposing that there is an aspect of the phenomenology of experience which is inherently particular, that the subject matter of a given experience involves particular objects and events. The two are reconciled where we see the subject matter of a particular experience as being context-determined, given by the context-invariant content and the particular circumstance in which the experiential event occurs.

3. In applying Burge's model to the case of indiscriminable twins, it is easy to see also how it can apply to the problem case of hallucinations. For the account does not make contentful states *per se* object-involving. Indeed, Burge has long developed accounts of thought *de re* designed explicitly to accommodate the possibility of thought about the non-existent. For a long time he has advocated the use of a negative free logic in giving the truth conditions of statements, on which atomic predications containing an empty term are not considered meaningless, as Evans would insist for Russellian terms, but simply false.²⁵ In relation to the present kind of case, involving demonstrative thought about perceived objects, he draws the following moral:

It is possible for an applied demonstrative element to fail to have a referent. Since thoughts are individuated in terms of their contents (including the token applications of demonstrative elements in thought), some demonstrative thoughts are not *de re*. Moreover, since some demonstrative token applications that in fact have a referent might have failed to have had one (if the contextual circumstances had been different), some thought tokens that are in fact *de re* are not essentially *de re*. The very same thought content might have lacked a referent if the world beyond the thought had been different.²⁶

Applying this in the terms we have used of the phenomenal nature of particular experiential episodes and their intentional content, we might extrapolate so. When one has a veridical perception, the particular experiential episode one has then has a phenomenal nature which is only adequately articulated by making reference to the very objects and events which are appropriately related to the occurrence of the experience in that very context. In so describing how things are presented as being we specify the conditions under which the experience is veridical relative to that very context. Nonetheless, there can be an exact qualitative duplicate of this experience in another context where no appropriate object of perception is present. Such an experience can share the very same intentional content with the perceptual experience, since that content, in being given in a manner analogous to an open sentence is object-independent. In that context, one cannot specify what the object of perception is, since there is none, other than in a conniving way which makes apparent reference to something which necessarily does not exist (the hallucinated object of perception).

For the hallucination and perception to warrant the same explanation we only require that they be of the same qualitative kind: this is captured

25. For one exposition of the account see (Burge 1973). For applications to the case of empty demonstratives see (Burge 1983). For more on belief *de re* see his (Burge 1977). For our purposes the adoption of a *negative* free logic is not required, though the idea that there can be contents where no appropriate object is present is.

26. (Burge 1993), p.208.

by the common, object-independent content. In order to do justice to the intuition that the very object one is perceiving is an aspect of the phenomenology of one's experience, we must recognise that such objects figure within any adequate specification of the particular phenomenal nature of the experience one has at a time, and this is reflected in giving the truth conditions of how things are presented relative to that context.

In fact, Burge's own development of an account of perceptual demonstrative reference goes beyond this set of claims. He claims that it is inessential to a token demonstrative thought that it is *de re*. The very same demonstrative thought or utterance could have occurred on an occasion on which there was no appropriate object to be thought about. If we are thinking of utterances, then it is plausible to suppose that the production of speech or an inscription is independent of the distal environment in which the utterance is made, and hence it might seem arbitrary to individuate the use of words in a particular way relative to the presence or absence of objects in the environment. So perhaps Burge is warranted in the modal commitments he avows for the example he is looking at. However an intentionalist concerned with experiential events should be wary of affirming this additional claimed independence. The identity of individual events in the stream of consciousness may well not be independent of their causal history.

So, once we have addressed the intuitions relating to indiscriminable twins, we can see that the relevant notions of context-independent content and context-dependent correctness or truth conditions provides us with the materials for both marking what is distinctively particular about the phenomenology of experience while attributing an object-independent content to these experiences.

4. The intuitions that we appealed to in the case of indiscriminable twins has directed us towards an account of the intentional content of sensory experience which would seem to answer our initial queries about how intentionalism allows for the particularity in the phenomenology in our perceptual experience. Yet one might still be worried whether Burge's account really secures objects the correct role in experience. Just such a worry is expressed by McDowell. He associates Burge's conception of *de re* belief with 'two-factor' views of content, and against these complains:

Once the subject's cognitive world has been segregated from his involvement with real objects this merely terminological move cannot restore genuine sense to the idea that we can get our minds around what we believe—even when the belief is *de re*.²⁷

27. (McDowell 1984), p.293.

It is not clear whether the objection here to two-component views is supposed to tell equally against Burge's account, however McDowell does present matters as if one has no option but to adopt McDowell's position in response, so if we are to find an argument against a Burge-like view, it will be located here. McDowell elaborates on the ideas a bit more in a later paper, where he complains of such accounts of intentionality that:

...if we try to see intentionality as at most partly determining what it is that a subject thinks, we leave ourselves without anything genuinely recognizable as a notion of intentionality at all. The two-component picture of mind... aims to codify the idea the thesis that in these cases intentionality is only a partial determinant of what the subject thinks; and the complaint can be focused by noting that the internal component is the only place in a two-component picture for the ideas associated with that aspect of intentionality which concerns the directedness of thought to specific objects... Directedness towards external objects enters the picture only when we widen our field of view to take in more than the internal component. So on this conception there is no object-directed intentionality in cognitive space.²⁸

Given our current concerns, one might restate this worry so. If we assume that the generalist thesis of McGinn and Davies is false, our perceptual experience in cases of veridical perception is experience of the very objects which we can then perceive. In describing the experience from the subject's point of view, one should demonstrate those very objects in one's specification of what this experience is like. Yet, according to Burge, one could have such an experience with the same content and yet be hallucinating. In such a case no such objects would be presented to the mind, since one would be perceiving nothing. But if there is nothing before the mind in the case of hallucination, and if what determines the phenomenological nature of the experience in this case is the same as in the perceptual case, then surely it does not determine the presence of objects to the mind even when veridically perceiving. Perceptual experience, then, when conceived from the subject's point of view would lack appropriate direction on an object.

This worry assimilates a metaphysical claim about the status of experience with a phenomenological claim about it. The phenomenological claim is that particular objects figure within the phenomenal nature of our experiences. There is a *this-such* presented to one when one's eye are open and one's attention is directed out at the world. The metaphysical claim is just a specific version of what I label elsewhere, 'Actualism': that the objects of perception, in figuring as the presented elements of one's experience (i.e. the phenomenological claim), must actually be constituents of the ex-

28. (McDowell 1986), p.165. The main target of his criticism here is identified as McGinn in (McGinn 1982b). In the earlier paper McDowell associates Burge's approach to *de re* belief with McGinn's conception.

perience. But an intentionalist who adopts the line suggested here will simply deny that these two claims have to go together.

For such a theorist, the proper description of the phenomenal nature of experience when one does perceive some object is to be given partly by reference to the very object before one then. In that context, the correct expression of the demonstrative content of the experience is to make reference to the actual object which can be referred to in that situation. This is quite consistent with recognising that in some other circumstance a state of mind with the very same content would not be expressible in the same way, i.e. by demonstrating that very object. Qualitatively the two experiences would be the same. As we saw in discussion of Davies, the fact that two experiences are qualitatively the same does not force us to deny that in the one case a particular object must be picked out in relation to the phenomenal nature which is not picked out in the other.

McDowell will only get his conclusion if he insists that the phenomenal nature of a given experience can be specified in a context-invariant way, and hence can move from the recognition of object-free instances such as those of hallucination, we must conclude that even in the case of perception, an intentionalist will have to claim that the nature of experience is object-free as well. But this is to ignore the possibility of the kind of account we have sketched above: one on which an aspect of the phenomenal nature of an experience is not something guaranteed to be replicated in any other experience of the same kind.

The room for this response would not be available had we focused on aspects of phenomenology which are repeatable across times or possible situations. When we have a repeatable element of the phenomenology, an element which will thereby turn up in the shared phenomenal character of two experiences of the same kind, we can ask of that element whether it can occur in the absence of the corresponding feature in the world. If it can, then presumably there is some adequate description to be given of it which makes no reference to the actual object of the experience. So the phenomenal nature of such an experience is describable independent of this subject matter, as McDowell complains. Indeed, many of the two-factor theories of content assume that some form of generalisation from the case of indexical thought to all aspects of thought is possible. These theories precisely ignore the importance of those aspects of experience or thinking which are repeatable from those which are tied to a particular occasion. Nothing I have said here undermines the questions that McDowell can press against such views.

Could one press McDowell's objection further? What would be the consequences of embracing Burge's actual position and allowing that the very same experiential event could on one occasion possess an object and on another lack one? McDowell might press that, after all, some adequate

description can be given of the phenomenal nature of the experience which makes no mention of the object perceived—namely a description available in the merely possible situation in which that very event occurred as an hallucination. Even if that description would not be available in our actual context of veridical perception, it would nonetheless report the very same facts in the context in which it was truthfully available.

I suggested above that this aspect of Burge's position is optional. If instead we insist that the cause of the individual mental event was essential to it, we can deny that there are any such circumstances. At the same time, conceding this would not force one to deny that events of just the same type could occur but with different antecedent causes. One will agree with Burge that it is not of the essence of the perceptual event that it is *de re*: events of just the same psychological kind occur without an object. But with respect to the individual event which did occur we insist that the object perceived is necessarily an element of the experience's causal history. If this is so, then there would be no possibility of having the very same individual experience, and hence phenomenal nature, without the very same object as part of its subject matter. Although the intentional theorist will deny that the object is a constituent of the experience, that is not revealed by finding a situation in which the very same experience presents a different object, or none at all.

Note also that here I am rejecting McDowell's arguments, and not his resting place. Like McDowell, I think it plausible to claim that we conceive of our veridical perceptions as having among their constituents the objects and events we then perceive. It follows from this that we can have no experience of this kind when we hallucinate and not appropriate objects are present for us to perceive. Hence, if we can show that we have grounds for accepting this constitutive role of the objects of perception, intentionalism must be misguided.

What I have resisted here, though, is the claim that there is any simple move from the recognition that particular objects and events figure in the phenomenal nature of particular experiential episodes to the conclusion that they must thereby be constituents of the experience. The latter claim concerns the metaphysical status of experience and our modal and constitutive intuitions about experience. It is here that a Naïve Realist about experience and an intentionalist will disagree. I doubt that simple introspection of one's experience, unaided by further theorising could reveal which view has a better grip on this issue.

To that extent, recognising the particularity of perceptual experience should not thereby lead one simply to reject intentionalism. It should, however, make one reflect more about the general metaphysics of ascription of content to psychological states and the ways in which one can be led to have genuinely singular thoughts or experiences.

5. The picture that we have drawn and re-modelled from Burge's account of demonstrative content is not the only form of object-independent account on offer. But is the appeal to the idea of experiences as particular episodes contrasting with experiences as kinds of event legitimate here? To pursue this question further it is useful to contrast the account elaborated above with Gareth Evans's sketch of the informational content of experiential states. Although Evans is associated with the idea of object-dependent content, in fact he only argues for the thesis with respect to conceptual states of mind, Russellian singular thoughts. He contrasts perceptual states and other states of what he calls 'the informational system' with conceptual judgements and beliefs. The way in which experiences come to be about or of individuals contrasts with the way in which our thoughts can be directed at an individual.

Evans first contrasts belief and experience so:

In general, it seems to me preferable to take the notion of *being in an information state with such-and-such content* as a primitive notion for philosophy, rather than to attempt to characterize it in terms of belief... a fundamental (almost defining) property of the states of the informational system...[is] their 'belief-independence'.²⁹

For Evans, the informational system is in play in perception, memory and testimony. The information one acquires through perception or testimony and is preserved through memory or testimony underpins our ability to keep track of individuals and succeed in having conceptual thoughts about them.

One of the key elements of the picture, which Evans elaborates and later exploits in his accounts of demonstrative reference and of conniving uses of empty terms, is the manner in which an informational state can be of, or about, a given individual:

We can speak of a certain bit of information being of, or perhaps from, an object, in a sense resembling the way in which we speak of a photograph being of an object...

The sense in which a photograph is of an object is as follows. A certain mechanism produces things which have a certain informational *content*. I shall suppose for the moment that this content can be specified neutrally, by an open sentence in one or more variables...

Red (x) & Ball (x) & Yellow (y) & Square (y) & On Top Of (x, y).

...Notice that I have explained the sense in which a photograph is of an object, or objects, without presupposing that a specification of its *content* must make reference to that object, or those objects. (*op. cit.* pp.124-5.)

29. (Evans 1982), p.123.

Now this presentation has an obvious parallel with Burge's discussion of demonstrative reference in the appeal to the use of open sentences in specifying the content of the state in question. However, there are also a number of key differences. Perhaps the most obviously salient one is Evans's claim that this account holds for non-conceptual states of information and not for beliefs and judgements, whereas there is no such restriction on Burge's view. There are also other, metaphysical, differences which are germane to the discussion we have had above of the import of choosing a context-dependent construal of the correctness conditions for perceptual states. Briefly I will review one aspect of Evans's argument for non-conceptual content which has been neglected before focusing on the metaphysical issues about the relation between information and psychological states.

One of the ways in which Evans's views were novel was the introduction of the idea of a non-conceptual content to experience in particular, and informational states in general. Both the coherence of the idea of non-conceptual content and Evans's arguments for his own conception have been much discussed, yet there is a key motivation for it, presented in the passages we have been discussing which seems almost entirely to have been ignored or misunderstood.

Evans offers three main reasons for accepting the idea that there are non-conceptual states of mind. One concerns the similarities between us and creatures who lack the conceptual sophistication we have but yet seem capable of experiencing the world as we do—the idea of non-conceptual content is then intended to capture this similarity. The second concerns the way in which experience can present the world as being one way or another in a more fine-grained manner than we typically have concepts for. This we can think of as relating to the predicative aspect of the content of informational states, what Evans initially models in terms of open sentences. It is this ground which has caused the greatest amount of comment in discussions of non-conceptual content, since it has been attacked and defended in recent work by McDowell and Peacocke.³⁰

The third, however, has been neglected and this relates to the non-predicative aspect of an informational state and how it relates to a particular object or event as its source. At the outset of sketching Evans's position I noted the appeal to belief-independence as a fundamental and significant mark of the difference between the informational system and conceptual states such as belief and judgement. Some discussions of non-conceptual content have sought to use the idea of belief-independence as a ground for attributing non-conceptual content to experiential states.³¹ However no appeal to the brute idea that one can disbelieve one's experiences and hence experience things to be a certain way without so believing them to

30. See (McDowell 1996), (McDowell 1999), (Peacocke 1999), (Peacocke ***).

31. See (Crane 1992).

be is at all plausible. This is for two reasons. First, there are plenty of belief-independent psychological states which we have no reason to think of as essentially non-conceptual. Take the case of preference: one may very well prefer that Manchester City should end up being top of the league in 2002 while remaining entirely agnostic about their chances of doing so. Such a preference would be belief-independent if any psychological state is, yet it is surely not a non-conceptual state, if there is to be any interesting contrast between conceptual and non-conceptual contentful psychological states. Indeed, at first blush, the mere fact that one can disbelieve one's senses reflects something about the attitude involved in experiencing, that it is not one of believing or simply accepting, rather than anything about the contents to which one takes that attitude.

Second, it would be a misreading of Evans to attribute to him the view that all informational states are exhaustively non-conceptual. He does, it is true, explicitly hold this view for perceptual informational states, but he clearly identifies episodes of testifying and hearing testimony as examples of the operation of the informational system. Such linguistic episodes plausibly have a conceptual content, when one indicates to someone that such and such is the case; and nothing in Evans's own discussions of testimony indicates that he thinks that the same grounds for the non-conceptual character of the predicative component of experiential states should carry over to the case of testimony. Furthermore, where we have genuine testimony exploiting a language, we certainly lack Evans's other general motivation for supposing states to be non-conceptual, namely that we can share them with non-language using non-human animals and human infants.

Taking these together suggests we need to find a more fine-grained appeal to belief-independence in Evans's thought, since it is clear from the passages quoted earlier that Evans does believe that there are grounds tracing to belief-independence for the non-conceptual nature of informational states. Where we need to look, I suggest, is in Evans's conception of how conceptual states can be properly singular and relate one to or be about a particular object. For example, in his discussion of communication and information, Evans puts forward the following claim:

...in order to understand [a Russellian] term, one must oneself believe that there is something to which the term refers. (This thesis is in fact implicit in my claim that such singular terms require information-based thoughts for their understanding, since, according to my explanation of the notion of information-based thoughts, such thoughts commit the subject to the existence of something as their object...) ³²

32. (Evans 1982), pp.326-7.

The discussion which then ensues concerns the problems brought about for this claim by precisely considering cases of putative hallucination in which a subject disbelieves their experience and yet is able to exploit the information that it contains about its source—this being a potential counter-example to the claim that one does need to have the belief in question.

So I suggest that Evans means the following by belief-dependence. In relation to any conceptual psychological state, such a state can genuinely contain an object-dependent singular concept, or in Evans's terminology Idea, where the thinker believes that there is something which the concept picks out. When one prefers that Manchester City top the league in 2002, one may be agnostic about whether this really will be the case, but one cannot be agnostic about the existence of the football club if that is what one really prefers. This stands in stark contrast to what Evans called informational states. For these psychological phenomena (both experiences and cases of testimony) can be related to particular objects of events, that is, they can give one information relating to some particular object or event, and yet their occurrence is belief-independent in the sense just introduced: one can be in such a state (i.e. have an experience, or understand what someone has said) while lacking the requisite existential belief concerning the object the information is about. So, if informational states which are belief-independent in this sense are about, in some sense or other, particular objects or events, then they are directed on them, or about them in a non-conceptual manner. So the non-predicative aspect of informational states, according to Evans, is non-conceptual precisely for this reason.

If Evans's argument is sound, then this marks a significant difference between him and Burge: for Burge hopes to extend his account to all demonstrative thought, but Evans seems to give reason to restrict the account to those special cases where the occurrence of the state is independent of the relevant existential belief. Whether this is a fundamental difference between the two approaches once we have modified Burge's position in the way indicated above is a moot point, though. For one might hold that demonstrative thought proper, in contrast to the corresponding experiential state, should allow of repeatability, the entertaining of the very same thought content on a different occasion. In the end, for both, perception may be a special case, even if for different reasons.

Moreover, it is questionable whether Evans's argument for non-conceptual content is sound; and for a reason that Dummett notes in his discussion of Evans on existence. Evans concedes in his discussion of make-believe that two thinkers who mistakenly take themselves to be hallucinating a little green man may actually succeed in referring to him within the scope of pretence when commenting on their joint hallucination:

...let us switch to the other version of the story, in which the subject and his companion are *mistaken* in believing that their senses deceive them—there

is a little green man on the wall. It seems clear that a subject in this situation, thinking within the scope of the pretence in the way I have outlined, would actually be thinking of that little green man—entertaining various thoughts concerning him. In allowing his thoughts to be controlled by the information, he is in fact responding to the properties of the little green man.³³

Dummett objects to this concession on Evans's part:

Evans thus appears to be mistaken in claiming that the speakers engaging in make-believe discourse on the basis of what they take to be an illusion are referring to something actual if they are not in fact victims of any illusion; this claim is incompatible with his own principle making intention a necessary condition for reference.³⁴

An alternative response here is to see Evans's reaction to his own example as a natural and plausible one, however it conflicts with the details of his overall theory. For, one might elaborate the point so. What matters in one's coming to refer to a given object is that one have a capacity for picking it out in thought or talk and that one can rationally exercise it. We cannot exploit such capacities in intentionally thinking about such objects without thereby taking the objects to exist, for one can only try to do what one thinks is possible, but if one believes there to be no object there can one could not be referring to it if one was hallucinating. However, make-believe is a special case: one can employ actual abilities to refer in pursuit of purely make-believe ends. So one may exercise a genuine capacity to refer to an object even if one only make-believelly takes the object referred to to exist without really believing it to exist.

Yet in recognising the plausibility of this position, Evans undermines one of the main claims for such states to be non-conceptual with respect to their referential component. For if one can say that a singular concept is present through one's possessing the capacity to refer to the object, then the particularity of experience could nevertheless be conceptual despite the belief-independence that Evans notes. Rather than marking the non-conceptual nature of the referential component of informational states, Evans's observations may rather reflect the passivity of such states. One does not come to have an experience with a particular content intentionally, so that one could not intentionally engage a referential capacity without intending to would not stand in the way of an experience exploiting that capacity coming about.

To force this move on Evans would be to press his account of reference at a fundamental point, for in highlighting the idea of us possessing referential capacities independent of our belief in the existence of what is picked out, one challenges Evans reliance on what he calls 'Russell's Principle', that to refer to an object one must know which thing it is. If we assume

33. (Evans 1982), p.362.

34. (Dummett 1992), p.302.

that such knowledge requires corresponding belief, one can know which object a given thing is only given that one believes that it exists. One can hardly think that the observations made above about make-believe can really settle the matter here. To make proper progress one needs to review the foundation of Evans's broader views about reference. For our purposes it suffices to point out that Evans's arguments are not decisive.

But let us turn to the other issue, that of the metaphysical status of information and informational states. Evans fleshes out his account of informational states and bits or pieces of information throughout chapter five, and sums up the view of information so:

...[this] introduces a use of the notion of the same (bit or piece of) information which deserves explanation, even though it is common. We want to be able to say that two informational states (states of different persons) embody the same information, provided that they result from the same initial informational event..., even if they do not have the same *content*: the one may represent the same information as the other, but *garbled* in various ways. Conversely, and obviously, it is not sufficient, for two informational states to embody the same information, that they have the same content. When two states embody *the same information*, they are necessarily such that if the one is of an object *x*, then so is the other.³⁵

This introduces a rather different conception of how psychological states relate to their contents from that we discussed above. Recall that in discussing object-dependent conceptual content of thoughts and experiences we noted a general methodological principle that there should be some notion of content, 'psychologically real' content, which plays an individuating role for thinkings. Once we have factored in the attitude taken by a subject towards a content, sameness and difference of kind of thinking are mirrored in sameness and difference of the thought content that the subject has an attitude towards. Parallel with this, the essential properties of such propositional attitudes is simply the attitude a subject has and the content towards which the subject has that attitude. For states of the informational system, Evans employs a three-fold distinction: there are states or episodes of individual thinkers which are the concreta of the system's operation—the having of an experience, the recalling of a past event, the telling of a story; there is the bit or piece of information which the state embodies; and there is the content of that bit of information. The first thing to emphasise is that for Evans informational states are not individuated by contents but rather by the bits of information that they carry; while bits or pieces of information are in turn not individuated by content.

What is the force of claiming that the content of a piece of information does not individuate it? What is Evans making us focus on when we think

35. (Evans 1982) (pp.128-9.).

of content as neither necessary nor sufficient for the bit of information to be the same? One way of construing this is simply in terms of the metaphysics of content and psychological states we introduced with the methodological principles. Where a psychological state is individuated by its content, its having that content is a general attribute of it. We can make no sense of two psychological states being entirely alike in their general characteristics and yet differing in their content. In contrast, Evans wants to stress the intuitive force of the idea that one might have two pieces of information about distinct individuals, each of which characterises the individuals in the same way while the pieces of information are different simply because each traces back to a distinct individual. Bits of information, then, are not to be construed as, so to speak, universals, but individuals. What marks one piece of information from another is a particular historical fact, where it originates, which cannot be read off from how things are qualitatively presented as being.

At the same time, even if pieces of information are individuals, they are not particulars. For the same piece of information can be present in the minds of different subjects at the very same time, for example when we both witness a scene from the same point of view, or you pass on your tit-bit of gossip to me. Moreover the same piece of information can be present in different psychological states of an individual at different times. The same piece of information can be embodied in my current perceptual experience of a rubber duck before me, and in my experiential recall of the scene some days hence. So pieces of information are neither uniquely located at one time as concrete individuals are, nor are they unrepeatable at different times, as particular events are.

If we stick at the level of content then there is an obvious similarity between Evans's approach and Burge's (*modulo* the issue of content being non-conceptual). For in both cases the content is specified by using an open sentence, and hence is contrasted with a purely existential content.³⁶ But for Burge the content is individuating of the episode of thinking, and he claims as noted above, that it is inessential to a token demonstrative thought that it should be *de re*. Evans takes the content neither to be individuating of the state nor of the piece of information it conveys. Rather pieces of information are individuated by their source, so it is essential to a piece of information that it come from the source that it does.

Though pieces of information are essentially tied to their sources, this does not lead Evans to deny that a piece of (mis-)information can be present in a case of hallucination. Necessarily such information will not be sourced in any object, even any merely possible object, but since the content of a piece of information can be akin to a mere open sentence, the lack

36. Though in fact, Evans does allow for informational states to have a purely existential content and yet to be sourced in an object, at least in the case of testimony, see pp. 127-8.

of an appropriate object does not show that the piece of information could not exist. So to this extent as well, Evans, like Burge, allows for object-independent informational states.

As I indicated above, Burge's attitude to the modal independence of a token experience from its object is not essential to his view; and we have already seen reason to reject it. An intentionalist can quite consistently accept both claim that the object of an experience has no constitutive role within it and the claim that the experience itself could only have occurred in the given context in which it happens. In that case, one will happily allow that an experience of just the same kind could occur in a case of hallucination, but yet deny of the very token experience one enjoys when perceiving that it could have occurred in another context. There would still be a difference between this position and Evans's, but the difference is more subtle and suggestive than a simple one about trading modal intuitions about object-dependence or independence of information.

Evans's idea of a piece of information is something that can recur in different psychological states and which has a definite history: two psychological states can both embody the same piece of information only if they are causally connected in the right way. For this reason alone, we cannot conceive of Evans's pieces of information on the model I suggested earlier for the particular phenomenal nature of a perceptual episode. In that discussion I exploited the idea of there being an unrepeatable aspect of an experiential episode which could be determined by a context-limited aspect of the intentional content. But for Evans, the piece of information must be repeatable across the different psychological states of individuals and the same individual at different times. So the aspect in which we explain its particularity must be consistent with this repeatability. Here we have the key difference between the picture of experiential content elaborated above and Evans's account in terms of information and information states.

Having isolated the difference, the question to raise now is which picture the intentionalist should really prefer. There is not enough space here to assess properly how successful Evans's alternative picture is. Perhaps two comments might suffice. The first is that Evans is clearly tapping in to intuitions that we have about how information, in some broad construal, can come to be disseminated across a population of thinkers, and preserved within the mind of one thinker. It is another thing to claim, though, that the intuitions can together be used to develop a useful theory of information. That theory would not only require us to have some conception of what the right causal connections ought to be across thinkers and within a thinker for the information to be preserved, but also to make work for the idea of the very same piece of information being transmitted, rather than simply appealing to the causal connections between each of the states in the system and the initial event which is the source.

Secondly, in the view articulated here much weight has been placed on the idea that perceptual experiences are particular, unrepeatable events. This opens room for the idea that there is an aspect of the phenomenology of such events, their particular phenomenal nature as we might say, which we ignore when we discuss their qualitative character as something they could share with other experiential events, events of the same phenomenological kind. The contrast between the particular phenomenal nature of an experience and its kind, I then suggested, can be modelled by an intentional theorist in terms of the context-dependent correctness conditions on the one hand and the context-invariant content that all experiences of that phenomenal kind will share on the other. However, following Evans, we may question whether there really can be a useful notion of the phenomenal nature of a particular experience which is unrepeatable in this way. For, in his discussion of the informational system, Evans stresses the idea that a perceptual experience and a later memory experience can present the very same piece of information to a subject to be exploited in thought. Whatever it is about the perceptual experience which makes it the presentation of the very objects or events it is the perception of, that same feature is to be found in a later memory of those objects and events. As I have stressed above, it is the need for this common element between the experience and the memory which leads to Evans's modification of the connection between psychological state and what individuates it. Instead of using content to individuate informational states, we have the appeal to pieces of information which are not themselves purely contents. But is Evans right to suppose that the way in which both perception and memory relate to the same particular event requires that we have a notion of content or information which is repeated between the distinct episodes?

It certainly is plausible that our memory experiences can in some way preserve our abilities to refer to particular objects which we have perceived earlier.³⁷ So it would be objectionable if a theory cannot accommodate in the right way our intuitions about how these connect. In sketching how the picture of the informational system captures the intuition, Evans uses the model of a photograph, where we have the intuition that two indistinguishable photographs may yet be of different scenes, having been caused by exposure to different events. At the same time, we think that copies of either photograph can be made by appropriate causal processes from one print to another. This is what is to give us the picture of how a memory may derive its content from a previous perception. As Evans wishes to stress, 'memory and testimony are... *recursive* elements of [the informational system] structure' (p.127). While it is highly intuitive that the way in

37. Evans himself suggests that there are restrictions on how the information in memory can be exploited for past reference, see the discussion of Russell's Principle and the Photograph Model in Chapter Four of *The Varieties of Reference*.

which an experiential memory relates one to a past event is in some way dependent on a past experience of that event—what has been called the Previous Awareness Condition for personal memory—it is equally intuitive that such a derivativeness is, in some sense or other, internal to the phenomenological content of the memory. Remembering is not phenomenologically the same as first perceiving some object or event, rather the object or event is presented as being in one's own past, in one's own experienced past. This aspect of derivativeness, or recursiveness, is not really captured by Evans's notion of a piece of information embodied by an informational state. For in this sense, both the perception and the memory will embody the very same piece of information, just as a copy of a photograph can look entirely like the original if reproduced accurately enough.

If this is right, then what the memory of an event needs to do is to represent something which is unrepeatable and particular about the original perceiving from which the memory derives. So we should want an account of how the particularity of experiential memory is secured which exploits a different account of how the particularity of the initial perceptual experience is secured. Since Evans account of information seems to offer us a uniform account of this for both experience and memory, that account is flawed, and in itself gives us no reason to reject the Burgean-type model offered here.

That suggests that the parallel between episodic memory content and perceptual content does not in the end give sufficient reason to prefer Evans's approach over the one elaborated here. We should after all hold on to the idea that the way in which a perceptual experience connects us to some particular individual or unrepeatable event involving that individual is peculiar to the perception itself and not replicated as such in the memory of that experience.

But the problem for Evans's view of the parallel between remembering and perceiving does not just raise a problem for his approach. Even if the intentionalist does not seek to explain the particularity of episodic memory in terms of the repeated content from the prior perceptual experience, he or she still needs to give some account of the relation between these two states. Elsewhere I suggest that there is indeed a more general problem here for intentionalism.³⁸

Despite Evans being the focus of discussion of object-dependent psychological states, his conception of the informational system offers us an example of how perceptual experiences can be object-independent states (though the basis of object-dependent perceptual demonstrative judgments). The picture that he offers is an alternative to the Burgean account we have been presenting. However, I have offered a couple of reasons for

38. For a more detailed discussion of this see my (Martin 2001) and (Martin 2002).

resisting the Evans approach, although nothing that is decisive in itself. Both approaches seek to do justice to the particularity of the phenomenology of perception without thereby making the intentional content or the psychological episodes object dependent in Evans's defined sense. So the initial worry can be resisted by an intentional theorist. Nonetheless, the deeper worry with Evans's account I have finished with may turn out to present a more serious problem for an intentional theory. That is a topic for further discussion elsewhere. The more general morals to draw relate to questions about the conditions for having the same kind of psychological state or event again, and the question of how that relates to our ascription of the same or different intentional contents to a psychological state. We need to get a proper overview of the way in which mental states do and do not replicate aspects of others and how that leads us to attribute the same or different contents to them.³⁹

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