

## Dissertation Abstract

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All of us are aware that our perceptual, imaginative and cognitive states can be *directed at* or *about* things, and we regularly treat others as having such states as well. Philosophers have dubbed the phenomenon “intentionality” and have puzzled over several aspects of it: for one thing, if “aboutness” is a relation, one of its relata can be non-existent, even necessarily non-existent; for another, it is not clear how to locate the “aboutness” relation within the structure of the natural world. On my view, the reason such aspects of intentionality have seemed so mysterious is that philosophers have failed to appreciate the close relationship between intentionality and consciousness. My dissertation develops and defends a consciousness-based theory of intentional mental content.

**Chapter 1: The Acquaintance Argument for Intrinsic Intentionality.** One strategy for giving an account of intentional aboutness has been to locate it within the domain of the *causal*. Perhaps, that is, the aboutness-relation just is a kind of causal relation in reverse (or a disposition to respond in certain ways to causal relations of certain sorts); or perhaps causal relations somehow constitute *inferential* relations, and a thing’s intentional content is fixed by its inferential profile. Such suggestions, often lumped together under the heading of “naturalized intentionality”, have been dominant among physicalist philosophers of mind for the last thirty years or so. I argue that these strategies cannot supply a metaphysics of intentional directedness, because the properties they point to lack a key feature of some intentional properties: viz. the feature of being *intrinsic to* the states that include them. Were no intentional properties intrinsic to the states that instantiate them, we would be unable to recognize mental states of distinct modes (i.e. visual vs. auditory, or perceptual vs. cognitive) as having intentional contents in common.

**Chapter 2: The Phenomenal Grounding Thesis.** If intentional directedness is not a matter of dispositions to cause and be caused in certain ways, what is it? Along with a number of recent philosophers I maintain that intentional directedness is fundamentally *an aspect of consciousness*. In order to motivate this view (which I call “The Phenomenal Grounding Thesis”), I discuss several arguments in the literature according to which certain forms of consciousness are (a) *sufficient* for intentionality; and (b) *necessary* for intentionality.

**Chapter 3: A Theory of Phenomenal Grounding.** Though there is substantial literature *defending* the Phenomenal Grounding Thesis, not much has been said by way of its *explanation*—a task I take up in the remainder of the dissertation. *Phenomenal properties* are experiential aspects of consciousness. There are many types of phenomenal property, e.g. sensory, somatic and proprioceptive and conative properties. According to my theory, a subject’s conscious mental states have the intentional content they do because they include phenomenal properties of a type distinct from all of those just mentioned: *phenomenal-intentional properties*. Example: the phenomenal-intentional property *being phenomenally-intentionally directed causality-wise*, when instantiated by a subject, presents the property *being a cause* to that subject, and consequently *being a cause* is part of the intentional content of her conscious state. (A subject’s *non-conscious* mental states are, on my view, her dispositions to instantiate conscious mental states under certain circumstances.)

**Chapter 4: The Structure of Phenomenal Intentionality I.** Intentional states have a certain structure—often, though not always, a *propositional* structure. I show how such *semantic* structure can be explained in terms of the *metaphysical* structure of phenomenal-

intentional states. I also explain how the instantiation of phenomenal-intentional properties amounts to semantic self-knowledge (e.g., knowing what one is thinking). I am thereby able to explain how my theory avoids the epistemological problems that I raised in Chapter 1.

**Chapter 5: The Structure of Phenomenal Intentionality II.** Mature human subjects can entertain intentional states of unbounded quantity and variety. I contend that a few primitive phenomenal-intentional properties (as of, e.g. objecthood, causality, spatial relations, agency, etc.) when properly embedded in perceptual, imaginative and cognitive states, can be used to construct all of these contents—or can be used, by the subject, as a way of leveraging her way to the instantiation of new primitive phenomenal-intentional properties as of all of these contents.

**Chapter 6: The Emergence of Phenomenal Intentionality.** How are phenomenal-intentional properties to be located within the natural order? On my view they amount to (along with the rest of consciousness) novel additions to reality, irreducible to physical systems on which they depend. Their emergence occurs according to a two-stage process: first, *subjects* emerge from physical systems, when those systems exhibit the right sort of organic unity. I explain such emergence in terms of the activation of latent capacities of the system's ultimate material constituents. (There are both substance-monist and substance-dualist characterizations of subject-emergence. I remain agnostic between them: this particular choice-point turns out to be of much less consequence than philosophers have typically supposed.) Second, subjects instantiate richly structured phenomenal-intentional states, in response to the particular functional arrangement at a time of such states' emergence bases. (These phenomenal-intentional states are in turn causally relevant to the ongoing dynamic evolution of the emergence base.) Put picturesquely, emergent subjects are—though are of course not aware that they are—*brain-readers* and *brain-programmers*.