

A link between global and intermodal intentionalism

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The result of our discussion of attention was that either global intentionalism or intermodal intentionalism must be false. But a reasonable case can be made that these theses should stand or fall together, so that if one is false then both must be.

Suppose that global intentionalism is true. Then phenomenal character supervenes on content for every type of state that has a phenomenal character at all. What would explain this supervenience holding for every type of state? A natural thought is that this is best explained by the fact that the nature of the supervening properties can be explained by the nature of the subvening properties: that we can explain the nature of phenomenal character in terms of content. But if this is true, then the modality which presents the relevant content should not matter, in which case intermodal intentionalism must be true.

Now suppose that intermodal intentionalism is true. Then the type of mental state which has a given content is irrelevant to determining the phenomenal character of that state: content alone determines the phenomenal character. But if this is true, then how could some state-types be such that, for those states, phenomenal character does not supervene on content? And if there are no such state-types, global intentionalism must be true.

This is sketchy at best. But if some argument of this sort can be made to work, we'd have an argument from the discussion of attention that (i) either global or intermodal intentionalism is false, and from the above that (ii) global intentionalism is true iff intermodal intentionalism is to (iii) the claim that both intermodal and global intentionalism are false.