

# Varieties of intentionalism

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Now that we have a rough fix on the representational and phenomenal properties we're interested in, a question naturally arises: how, if at all, are these properties related? Much recent discussion in the philosophy of perception has focused on the thesis of *intentionalism* (sometimes called "representationalism" or "representationism"), which is the view that the contents and phenomenal characters of perceptual experiences stand in a certain close relationship.

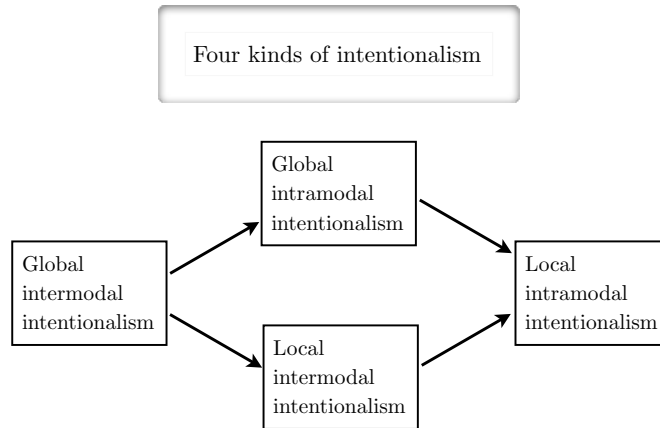
Different formulations: explanation vs. determination vs. identity vs. supervenience. Why to start with the last.

But of course there is not just one thesis of the supervenience of phenomenal character on content. Such supervenience theses vary on the following two dimensions:

- ▶ *Local vs. global*. Whether the supervenience thesis is supposed to hold for all mental states, or just for some proper subset of those states (for example, for perceptual experiences but not for bodily sensations).
- ▶ *Intramodal vs. intermodal*. Whether the supervenience thesis is supposed to hold only for pairs of states of the same type (for example, of the same sense modality), or for arbitrary pairs of states.

It's important to see the difference between these distinctions. The global/local choice is about whether the set  $S$  of states for which a supervenience thesis is advanced is the set of all mental states or a proper subset thereof. The intramodal/intermodal distinction is about, given a choice of  $S$ , whether the supervenience thesis holds for any pair of states in  $S$ , or only states of (in a sense which the intramodal intentionalist must explain) of the same type or category.

This pair of distinctions generates four intentionalist supervenience theses, the entailment relations between which are represented as follows:



Each of these four theses may be further subdivided according to the following threefold distinction:

- ▶ *Time-restricted intrapersonal vs. time-unrestricted intrapersonal vs. interpersonal.* Whether the supervenience thesis is supposed to hold for pairs of experiences had by arbitrary subjects, or only for experiences of a single subject, or only for experiences of a single subject within a certain restricted time interval.

Again, there are obvious entailments within this dimension — every interpersonal intentionalism will entail the corresponding time-unrestricted intrapersonal intentionalism, and the latter will entail the corresponding time-restricted intrapersonal intentionalism — but this distinction is independent of the two distinctions mentioned above, giving us twelve intentionalist theses — three corresponding to each box in the above chart.

Why bother trying to figure out exactly what is the strongest true intentionalist supervenience theses?

1. Many of the most interesting claims in the philosophy of perception — like the claims that phenomenal character is identical to content, or that the two stand in certain explanatory relations — entail supervenience claims. So, if we can show that certain of these supervenience claims are false, this will show that, for example, identity claims which entail those supervenience theses are also false.
2. These supervenience claims are relevant to currently popular naturalizing programs in the philosophy of mind. A widely held view is that we can naturalize phenomenal character by giving a naturalistically acceptable account of the facts about mental representation on which the facts about phenomenal character supervenes; but to carry this out we need to know exactly which facts about mental representation (if any) form the minimal supervenience base for facts about phenomenal character, so we know exactly

which facts about mental representation we need to give an account of. For example: do we have to give an account of what it is to be in an arbitrary mental state with a certain sort of content? Or also what it is to bear a certain attitude toward that content (i.e., for the mental state to be of a certain type)? And if the latter, just which distinctions between attitudes must we be able to explain?

3. If it turns out that if there is some necessary connection between the content and phenomenal character of perceptual experience, this is some thing which we should want our view of the nature of perceptual experience to explain; we should want to know why, in the case of perceptual experience (and perhaps other mental states) this necessary connection obtains. But if we want to give an explanation of this necessary connection, it would be good first to know exactly what the necessary connection between the representational and the phenomenal is.