

# Some reflections on Husserlian intentionality, intentionalism, and non-propositional contents

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Husserl's theory of intentionality and compares it to contemporary debates about intentionalism. I first show to what extent such a comparison could be meaningful. I then outline the structure of intentionality as found in *Ideas I*. My main claims are that – in contrast with intentionalism – intentionality for Husserl (i) covers just a region of conscious contents; that it is (ii) essentially a relation between act-processes and presented content; and that (iii) the side of act-processes contains non-representational contents. In the third part, I show that Husserl also (iv) offers resources against intentionalism's exclusive concern with propositional content.

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## 1

In this paper, I want to talk about intentionality as Husserl understood it. Moreover, I want to do that in order to facilitate comparisons to contemporary intentionalist theories about consciousness. It is not immediately obvious that such comparisons would be fruitful or even possible. Although terminologically affiliated (and often used interchangeably), intentionality is arguably very different from what is today called intentionalism. In spite of this, both theories should have enough in common to be meaningfully contrasted. Whereas I will discuss Husserlian intentionality in considerable detail, I can only touch the surface of more recent intentionalist theories here.

There are a number of views today that go by the name intentionalism, including Byrne (2001), Crane (1998, 2003, 2009), Marcus (2006), and Stoljar (2007). Quite often, these theories are taken to belong to the broader class of representationalist theories of mind, which includes Harman (1990), Dretske (1995),

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Tye (1995, 2002), Shoemaker (1998, 2000), Lycan (2001, 2015), Schellenberg (2011), Seager and Bourget (2007), and Bourget (2015). At least most intentionalists accept that intentionalism and representationalism are virtually identical concepts.<sup>1</sup> As Crane puts it, 'intentional content is representational content' (Crane 2009, 477).

Although sharing common commitments, intentionalism comes in different guises. On one broad reading, intentionalism specifies that consciousness can be exhaustively described in terms of its representational contents. Many intentionalists then define representational content in terms of truth-evaluable or propositional contents, for instance Dretske (1995), Tye (1995), and Byrne (2001). This broad reading leaves a range of issues undecided. For one, it leaves it open whether consciousness is to be understood as supervening on or as identical to representational content.<sup>2</sup> It also leaves open how one further specifies content as non-conceptual<sup>3</sup> or conceptual,<sup>4</sup> narrow<sup>5</sup> or wide,<sup>6</sup> etc. Important as each of these issues may be, I will not address them any further here.

It is important to note that intentionalism, as I use the term, is a theory about consciousness, the mind, or the mental – which I take as roughly equivalent notions here – not about the relation between that and the physical.<sup>7</sup> Part of the attractiveness of the intentionalist thesis is, however, that it captures what is essential about consciousness in a way that is conceivably translatable into the kind of understanding that belongs to natural science. In other words, intentionalism is promising when it comes to making the mystery of consciousness assessable in non-mystical, objective terms, by offering a convincing 'mark of the mental' (Crane 1998).

On an alternative reading, suggested by Crane, there is a difference between the view that consciousness 'is determined by its representational content' and the view that it is determined 'by its entire intentional nature' (Crane 2009, 475, also Marcus 2006, 250–251). Most intentionalists endorse the first view. They believe that consciousness is determined exclusively by representational contents. This commitment is often supported by the so-called transparency thesis: the idea that reflection reveals nothing about our experiences besides their intentional contents.<sup>8</sup> Crane himself endorses the second view, which suggests that the complete intentional relation – the representational content and what he calls the 'mode of givenness' of that content – determines consciousness.

When in what follows I speak of intentionalism without further specification, I have in mind the first, more widely held view. More exactly, I will use intentionalism to refer to the theory that specifies that consciousness as such can be exhaustively described in terms of its representational contents alone which in turn are taken to have propositional structure.

It is good to note now that both the motivations and benefits of standard intentionalism diverge widely from those of Husserlian intentionality. Unlike intentionalists, Husserl is not out to develop a unified theory of consciousness that offers a comprehensible tool to assess it as a natural object. Transcendental

phenomenology and naturalized approaches to consciousness in fact do not share the same object of study. Whereas natural science studies objects in the world, phenomenology studies the 'constitution' of objectivity through experience. Although such differences do not make comparisons impossible, they need to be accounted for if they are to make sense.

Husserl's phenomenology is designed to be a foundational science that offers a final clarification of all possible knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The way it does so is by describing how things are manifested in experience. Crucially, it is not just sensory qualities or subjective appearances which belong to experience or consciousness on this account; the manifestation of the external object itself also occurs 'in' transcendental consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Phenomenological reflection is therefore no introspection, or 'the mind studying the mind' (Preston 1994, 229). Instead, it studies the whole 'universe of my pure subjectivity' (Husserl 1974, 40), which includes object as much as subject. Intentionality, in this respect, does not belong to an inner realm of mental being; it is rather a structure of objects revealing themselves, which always involves a subjective act-side and a presented content-side (Husserl 1983, 191).

The fact that phenomenology studies the constitution of objectivity rather than an object called consciousness should raise the concern whether it can be juxtaposed to intentionalism at all. One way to address that concern is by 'de-transcendentalizing' phenomenology. Husserl himself acknowledges that one can detach all phenomenological results from the transcendental framework by transposing them to the 'natural realm' (Husserl 1960, 159). This de-transcendentalization results in a different science with its own object of study – now a worldly object called consciousness or the psyche.<sup>11</sup> It does not, however, thereby become a science of facts about physical reality; it pertains solely to consciousness or the mind, without making any direct claims about the causal structures undergirding that.

De-transcendentalizing consciousness is more suitable for juxtaposing Husserl's theory of intentionality to intentionalism as I specified it, as both can now be understood as theories of the structure of consciousness. At the same time, it must be noted that phenomenology has not thereby taken over the intentionalist aim of a naturalization of consciousness. Even on a de-transcendentalized account, phenomenological results do not pertain to facts about the natural world, but solely to the 'pure psyche' or mind. Husserlian intentionality (de-transcendentalized) can therefore compete well with existing theories about consciousness *qua* consciousness, because it offers an alternative way of understanding that. It cannot, however, criticize alternative theories insofar as those theories serve specific practical or scientific goals, which are not shared by the phenomenologist, since the latter is exclusively concerned with describing consciousness, not theorizing about it.

My central aim is to offer a reading of Husserlian intentionality that can be juxtaposed to contemporary intentionalist theories about consciousness.

The core of the paper (Section 2) deals with the general structure of intentionality as exposed in *Ideas I*. The overview offered here is deliberately broad and covers all the basic notions of Husserlian intentionality, namely *hyle*, *noesis*, *ego*, and *noema*. On the basis of this exposition, I argue that – in contrast with intentionalism – intentionality for Husserl (i) only covers a *region* of conscious contents; that it is (ii) essentially a *relation* between act-processes and presented content; and that (iii) the act-processes involve different types of non-representational content. In the final part (Section 3), I show that Husserl also (iv) offers resources to argue against intentionalism's exclusive concern with the propositional character of representational content. These four deviations suffice to make Husserl an interesting player in contemporary debates about intentionality.

## 2

Husserl believed different types of object-awareness demand different intentional analyses. There are specific descriptive analyses required for awareness of imaginary objects, objects of judgments, objects of perception, and so on. This is because, in each of these cases, there are essential differences in the structures of what one is conscious of and how one is conscious of it. At the same time, however, there is also a kind of fundamental structure undergirding all these intentional relations. There is, one could say, a universal structure of intentionality, which applies equally to all being conscious of. It is only this universal structure of intentionality that I address here. In order to address that structure fully, I will offer fairly general outlines of its four central constituents: the *hyle*, *noesis*, *ego*, and *noema*.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl notes that 'intentionality' is an essential feature of those experiences that fall within the scope of 'objectively oriented' phenomenology. Put differently, 'intentionality is what characterizes consciousness in the *pregnant sense*' (Husserl 1983, 199 my italics), that means: it characterizes the life of the 'ego-subject' which comports itself toward the world. At the same time, Husserl notes that 'we cannot say of each experience that it has intentionality.' Intentionality, then, denotes a specific characteristic of a certain *domain* of contents, namely those that involve a directedness toward or aboutness of something.

Husserl endorses quite a broad notion of such being directed toward, one which does not restrict it solely to 'actualized' ego-acts (Husserl 1983, 201). For instance, one can, on the one hand, effect an act of wishing or perceiving right now. An intentional act is then actualized by means of which the ego-subject is conscious of something. But, on the other hand, it is also possible for acts to remain in a state of uneffected potentiality; that is, they may remain to stir in the background without becoming actualized by the ego-subject (Husserl 1983, 272–275). For instance, a loud car is passing by, but one does not completely

'give in' to the strong tendency to turn one's attention toward it. In such cases, Husserl maintains that there still is a 'consciousness of something,' i.e. an intentional relation, although arguably in a new sense, for there is no object explicitly brought into the attentive field of the ego-subject, and there is thus properly speaking no ego-act effected which actualizes an intentional relation to an object.

Intentionality thus refers to a certain directedness or aboutness, which Husserl claims is an essential trait of consciousness in the pregnant sense. Especially the concept of directedness clearly involves a reference to two sides: there is the *something* directed at and the *act* performing the directing. For Husserl, intentionality is essentially a two-sided concept. It does not merely include the contents that are being presented, or the meaning that is made available. It also refers to the side of the ego-subject and the experiential processes and contents there.

What goes for intentionality also goes for the concept of content. Husserl thinks there are two fundamentally different ways in which we can speak of conscious content. These are called the *really inherent* (on the subjective act-side) and the *intended* object or presented content.

Both the really inherent and the presented content are considered by Husserl as abstract 'moments' of the intentional relation. The concept of moment has a technical signification in Husserl's mereology (the logic of parts and wholes). Unlike independent parts, moments are dependent on the whole. The leg of a chair is an independent part of the chair, but its color is an abstract moment (it cannot exist independently of its chair-substrate). The really inherent and presented content stand to the intentional relation the way color stands to its object. In what follows, I will first deal with the really inherent content as moment of the intentional relation, which is arguably a more elusive concept than that of the presented content. On Husserl's account in *Ideas I*, the really inherent content can in turn be further subdivided into two concepts: the *hyle* and the *noesis*.<sup>12</sup>

Intentionality, considered as a relation of directedness consisting of two abstract and mutually dependent moments, is peculiarly founded by something intrinsically non-intentional. Husserl calls this the hyle or hyletic data. The hyle is identical to what in *Logical Investigations* was called 'primary content.' According to Husserl, it concerns broadly the 'sensation-contents' of consciousness such as color-data, sound-data, and the like (Husserl 1983, 203). Considered abstractly for itself, the hyle has, Husserl notes, '*nothing pertaining to intentionality*' (Husserl 1983, 203). The contents that we are directed at through intentional acts – the presented contents – can only come about once the hyle is 'animated' through various activities of consciousness, an animation Husserl often refers to as a 'sense-endowing.' The hyle is thus basically the 'stuff-stratum' that underlies the act-side and the something directed at. By itself, however, the hyle is neither an act-process nor a presented content. At least considered in abstract isolation,

the hyle must be said to be insufficient to represent anything, i.e. it is non-representational, because it is 'purely' sensory.

In contemporary debates, the term 'phenomenal content' is often ambiguous between expressing (for instance) the color red as perceived property of an object and the color red as impressing datum.<sup>13</sup> Put differently, there is on the one hand the supposedly pure qualitative aspect of the impression red, while on the other hand there is also the intentionally animated 'seeing a red apple.' In *Ideas I*, Husserl makes room for a similar distinction. Here, Husserl restricts the notion of hyle to the sensuous impression, while locating the perceived property 'red' on the side of the presented content. The color red must therefore be said to have a double meaning in phenomenology: it is non-intentional as a hyletic datum, while at the same time it is part of the intentional content insofar as it is represented as a property of an object intended.<sup>14</sup>

This apparent doubling of the phenomenal content 'red' could perhaps lead to skepticism whether it is necessary to posit hyletic data altogether. For one, in reflecting on an ongoing perception of a red apple, does one really find something other than the redness that is a property of the represented apple? Is there an additional sensation-datum 'red' which is not represented but nevertheless part of consciousness in another sense? Those today who adhere to the so-called 'transparency thesis' – roughly the idea that introspection reveals nothing more to us than intentional contents, thus making a description of consciousness exhaustible in terms of its represented contents – would argue so, for instance Loar (1990) and Tye (2002). Given the prominence of the transparency thesis in contemporary debates, it would seem the burden of proof is on Husserl to show that phenomenological description does reveal something like non-representational hyletic data.

First, we may note that from phenomenological angles, too, Husserl has been criticized for his positing of utterly un-animated hyle.<sup>15</sup> Critics have taken it as a theoretical abstraction from phenomenological reflection. With respect to that objection, it should be noted that already in *Ideas I* Husserl explicitly remarks that the concern over the possibility of un-animated hyle is 'not to be decided here' (Husserl 1983, 204). Husserl, then, does not actually claim that upon reflection on one's lived experience one could find something like pure sense data. In later works, moreover, Husserl appears to become more sensitive to the internal structure of hyletic data, addressing their synthetic unity in terms of 'fields of sense' (Husserl 1997, 72–76). But the question remains pressing nonetheless: if reflection on actual experience only reveals (say) the color as object-property and not as (field of) hyletic data on the really inherent side, then what warrants the latter's positing?

To understand Husserl's position, we first have to make Husserl's distinction between really inherent content and presented content more clear. Husserl maintains that the expression 'content of consciousness' can mean two very different things. On the one hand, there are the contents of consciousness in

the sense in which the intentionalist nowadays speaks of them. Here, content means what is presented or made available. But according to Husserl, there are also contents which 'really inhere' in consciousness. Such really inherent contents are a necessary part of any experience as much as the intentional fillings of that state are, even though we are not directed at them. The hyle belongs to this side of real inherence.

So what could warrant the defense of such hyletic 'real contents'? In fact, some more recent philosophical work reflects the sorts of insights that motivated Husserl's positing of hyle. Crane (1988, 1992) is not far from Husserl in his discussions of the Müller-Lyer and waterfall illusions. Crane argues that for explaining the Müller-Lyer illusion, we need to posit two levels of representation that take place simultaneously, one intended to, the other not. Similarly, Dretske (1995) separates 'systemic' from 'acquired' representations. He illustrates that with an example of two dogs which are conditioned differently.<sup>16</sup> Whereas one dog is trained to salivate upon hearing a clarinet play any musical note whatsoever, the other does the same thing on hearing a C-note regardless of the instrument on which it is played. Now consider a C-note is being played on a clarinet, thus causing both dogs to salivate. According to Dretske, both dogs will have different 'acquired' representations: one intends a clarinet, the other a C-note. But at a non-conceptual level, they have identical representations (as they are exposed to the same sound).

Crane and Dretske both maintain that the non-conceptual representations involved in their examples are representational. In that respect, their accounts differ from Husserl's. Peacocke (2002), on the other hand, does defend non-conceptual non-representational contents:

Imagine you are in a room looking at a corner formed by two of its walls. The walls are covered with paper of a uniform hue, brightness, and saturation. But one wall is more brightly illuminated than the other. In these circumstances, your experience can represent both walls as being the same color: it does not look to you as if one of the walls is painted with brighter paint than the other. Yet it is equally an aspect of your visual experience itself that the region of the visual field in which one wall is presented is brighter than that in which the other is presented. (Peacocke 2002, 274)

Peacocke's point is similar to the ones made by Dretske and Crane. Unlike the latter, however, Peacocke formulates the point in terms of non-representational contents, which makes his position virtually identical to Husserl's. It is important to see that Peacocke's and Husserl's commitment need not contradict the fact that we never directly encounter non-representational contents directly upon reflection, as the transparency thesis suggests. For any such encounter would presuppose an 'animation' of the non-representational data. Put differently, we cannot be directed at hyletic data without turning them into presented contents. But that, so both Peacocke and Husserl suggest, should not suffice to reject the need to posit them.

On Husserl's views in *Ideas I*, the hyletic data of sensation are non-independent moments of perceptual experiences. They are intrinsic to intentional acts, but considered abstractly for themselves, they have nothing pertaining to intentionality. The idea of the real inherence of the hyle suggests a difference between two ways in which we can talk about content from a descriptive-phenomenological point of view. There are those contents that we are directed at, or that we are intentionally conscious of, and those that are directly impressed upon us and on grounds of which intentional animation is possible. Committing to non-independent content of the latter kind does not amount to a metaphysical postulation as some critics have suggested. As the accounts by Crane, Dretske, and Peacocke show, the motivation for it is in fact still shared by philosophers today.

One advantage of Husserl's own account of hyletic data is that no reference to cases of illusion or misrepresentation is required to discover them. For example, Husserl maintains that any ordinary visual perception involves the presentation of a three-dimensional object. But at the same time, it must be said that only one side of that presented object is directly given at any moment of experience. Precisely, this one momentary 'adumbration' of the intended object is present in consciousness in a different sense than is the intended object as a whole; the adumbration is what is quite literally 'impressed' upon consciousness, including all accompanying sensory content, color moments, etc. Even though a less sophisticated exercise of introspection might only reveal the whole object as it is intended, a proper phenomenological description, Husserl maintains, would be incomplete without an account of these real contents directly impressed upon consciousness.

Besides the hyle, there is another essential type of real (and thus non-intended to or not presented) content Husserl distinguishes: the *noesis*. Just like the hyle, the noesis is said to belong to consciousness as '*components proper*'; as opposed to the presented contents which are not components proper but part of consciousness as '*intentional correlates*' (Husserl 1983, 213). One way to explain the noesis is to say that it concerns those aspects of the experience that pertain broadly to the 'subjective side.' Noesis contains everything that belongs to the act-processes which 'animate' the hyletic data, thereby producing the presented content (which in turn does not belong to noesis).

More concretely, noesis involves things like modes of givenness or 'act-qualities' – judgmental, evaluative, imaginative, etc. Also, 'doxic modalities' – the sense of position-taking toward a presented content as something that one believes to exist or not – are part of the noesis. A hallucinatory object, for example, does not have the same doxic modality as a perceived object; only the latter is posited as actually existing. This point has more recently been emphasized by among others Martin (2002) and Stoljar (2007), but it has been familiar in phenomenology for over a century. Furthermore, noesis contains the directions of regard of the ego-subject to the objects it intends and the degrees of ego-awareness



or being-awake of the ego (Husserl 1983, 114). These distinctions allow one to e.g. memorize and imagine the same intended object, or to doubt and affirm the same intended object, etc.

It is important to note that this characterization of act-processes as giving shape to how one apprehends an object does not serve to suggest that the presented content is actually identical over the various possible changes in noesis. Husserl thinks that what is intentionally presented in perceiving an object has a different structure from what is apprehended in imagining the very same object. It is never *just* the mode of givenness which changes; through it the presentation of the object itself also changes. Likewise, an increase of ego-attention in a perception usually influences the details of the presented content, even though the same object is perceived. Doxic changes on the side of noesis also affect in their own way what one intends. Husserl thus allows for noetic changes to be reflected on the side of the presented content (Husserl 1983, 243). To say that one can imagine and perceive the same intended object does not, then, amount to saying that the presented content is in both cases identical in all respects.

This point is worth stressing because it is a common line of thought among intentionalists today to specify intentionality solely in terms of the represented content. One central argument driving this theory is that since supposed act-processes are mirrored in representational contents anyhow, there is really no need to appeal to act-processes (e.g. Lycan 2015).<sup>17</sup> Put differently, any difference in how one apprehends an object is a difference in how that object is represented. As I said earlier, if such an exclusively representational understanding of intentionality has its own practical or theoretical benefits, then I do not think Husserl would necessarily have to object to that. From a phenomenological viewpoint, however, the fact that noetic aspects are mirrored in the presented content does not imply that the act-processes are reducible to the latter. Descriptive phenomenology abides by the distinction between act-processes and presented contents – at least where ‘consciousness in the pregnant sense’ is concerned.

The noesis thus broadly covers all the act-processes of intentional directedness, that is, all the subjective processes that give shape to *how* one apprehends a presented content. With regard to noesis, it is worth pointing to a further necessary moment of intentionality: *the ego*. Husserl thinks any experience in the pregnant sense has an ego which lives in the act and which is intending the presented content. The ego-subject can be more or less present, actively engaging, or ‘sleeping’ – a degree of presence which correlates with noetic ‘degrees of attention’ (Husserl 1983, 222–226). Husserl considers the degree of ego-participation or ego-attention, as is particularly clear from his later work, as strongly determinative of the structure of the presented content which is the ‘end-product’ of the processes of noetic animation. For one, objects of judgment can only be brought about with active ego-participation – a kind of ‘will to knowledge’ or ‘voluntary participation’ on its behalf (Husserl 1997,

198) – whereas different kinds of perceptual contents by their essence correlate to different degrees of a merely awake or sleeping ego.<sup>18</sup>

The noesis, or that which ‘really inheres’ in consciousness generally, is considered by Husserl a ‘multiplicity’, over against the presented content, which is characterized particularly by ‘unity’ (Husserl 1983, 242). A peculiarity now follows, namely insofar as the ego-subject seems to belong to the side of noesis (it is clearly not intended *at* – it is that *which* intends) while simultaneously being a kind of unity in the stream of experience. The ego is not in perpetual change: it is one and the same ego-subject which looks at an object and walks around it, which performs mathematical calculations, and so on. The ego-subject is thus, it seems, a unique kind of *really inhering unity*, a status which arguably sets it apart from both noesis and noema.

Lastly, the outcome of what happens on the really inherent side, which consisted of the hyle as unanimated data and the various act-processes animating it, is called the *noema*. The noema is described by Husserl generally as the object as it is intended or simply as the presented content. Unlike the hyle and the act-processes, the noema is not really inherent in consciousness; it instead belongs to consciousness as intentional correlate, i.e. it is that which one is conscious of precisely in the way in which one is conscious of it.

It is worth distinguishing between at least two notions of the noema. First, the term noema can point to the identical object given in an intentional experience. As Husserl remarks, ‘there is inherent in each noema a pure object-something as a point of unity’ (Husserl 1983, 314). Any intentional directedness, Husserl maintains, relates to a ‘something’, a ‘determinable *X*’ which is the bearer of predicates and which remains identical over the course of any perspectival changes (Husserl 1983, 315). This determinable *X* is an expressible, i.e. a conceptual content. Indeed, any noema, Husserl notes, ‘is expressible by means of significations’ (Husserl 1983, 295, also 319–320), and every act that is not itself objectifying ‘allows objectivities to be drawn from itself’ by a ‘change of attitude’ (Husserl 2000, 18).

Second, the noema can also be understood as a ‘full core’, which for Husserl denotes the object exactly as it is given in a concrete experience. We here have, on the one hand, the ‘object in the how of its determinations’, that is, the object precisely as it is meant with all its finer determinations. Such determinations may change (for instance as one walks around an object) even though the intended object-pole (the determinable *X*) remains identical. On the other hand, we also have the ‘object in the how of its modes of givenness’, which includes degrees of clarity and obscurity in which an object is intended (Husserl 1983, 314–316). One can thus intend one and the same object at different times with changing determinations, while it may also appear differently depending on whether it is given obscurely or clearly. With respect to this fuller notion of noema, the objective, determinable *X* is, Husserl maintains, only a ‘sort of *abstract form*’

(Husserl 1983, 316). In other words, the full noema bears an objective relation in itself (Husserl 1983, 308), but it is not exhausted by it.

At least within Husserl's phenomenological framework, which knows of no objects beyond what is for consciousness, the noema cannot be radically external to consciousness.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, this does not suggest that intentionality is a directedness toward internal mental objects.<sup>20</sup> Also, it does not imply a commitment to a notion of internal representational content. Husserlian phenomenology avoids theoretically constructed notions such as representation; it only purports to describe how things reveal themselves. Rather than speaking of representational content, it is thus better to take the full noema as the presented content in its complete 'finesse of grain.' The presented content, as that which one intends, thus opposes the really inherent contents and act-processes which are (disregarding special cases of phenomenological reflection) not presented to the ego-subject.

It should be clear that the noema does not coincide exactly with what many intentionalists today believe should be the exclusive concern of philosophers thinking about mental content. More exactly, the noema as presented content seems a narrower notion than that of representational content today. The noema serves to describe what stands over against the ego-subject and precisely in the way it does so. For Husserl, the whole notion of intentionality is, in fact, terminologically bound to the life of the ego-subject which comports itself toward things. Whereas a representationalist like Dretske would regard sub-personal sensory contents as a specific sort of systemic representations, Husserl, as I demonstrated earlier, does not deem it accurate to speak of representations or noematic content here.

### 3

In this final part, I summarize four aspects of Husserl's theory of intentionality that arguably set it apart from standard varieties of intentionalism today. The first three of these I have already dealt with; the last one is new. The first is that Husserlian intentionality covers a *region* of conscious processes characterized broadly by the life of the ego-subject. Intentionality at no point in Husserl's career serves to give an exhaustive interpretation of consciousness. Although I did not discuss it here, Husserl also has extensive phenomenological analyses of 'pre-intentional' consciousness, time consciousness and passive synthesis. This sharply contrasts with contemporary intentionalism, which suggests intentionality as a unifying theory for all of consciousness.

The second difference is that intentional consciousness for Husserl is essentially a *relation* between really inherent and intended contents: between ego, act-processes, and presented content. Most contemporary varieties of intentionalism seek to explain consciousness exclusively in terms of its representational contents. The Brentanean idea that 'consciousness is consciousness of

something' is here basically reduced to the 'of something.' Husserl, by contrast, more like for instance Crane, maintains that a descriptive account of the subject's conscious experience must take more into consideration than what can be found on the side of what is intended alone, namely the complete structure of intentional directedness, including noesis, hyle, and ego.

The third difference I indicated is that Husserl's theory of intentionality essentially relies on the positing of non-representational contents in the form of hyle. According to Husserl, there is a stuff-stratum of hyletic data which is endowed with sense through noesis out of the which the noema is then construed as an end product. For itself, such hyletic data have nothing pertaining to intentionality, i.e. they are non-representational (not presented) and therefore also non-conceptual. According to Husserl, hyle is simply a phenomenological fact of perceptual intentionality, even though it does not belong to the side of what is presented. I have suggested that this point could be very similar to Peacocke's (2002) more recent argument for non-representational content.

As a fourth difference, I want to suggest that Husserl's phenomenology is poorly compatible with an exclusively propositional account of the presented contents of consciousness. An important contribution in current literature against intentionalism framed in exclusively propositional terms is Crane (2014). Crane's criticism focuses on the neglect of so-called modes of presentation (e.g. perception, imagination, etc.) – which on the Husserlian picture of intentionality corresponds to the 'act-quality' located on the side of noesis. On both Crane's and Husserl's view, such modes are not themselves presented contents, but ways of presenting them. Crane explains it as follows:

Even when a state of mind has propositional content, it is not plausible that all aspects of the phenomenology of perceptual experience are determined by what determines this content (or its correctness-, accuracy-, or truth-condition). Blurred vision or objects in shadow are examples where either facts about a subject's visual experience, or facts about the illumination of objects, can give rise to differences in how things seem visually, which are not differences in the correctness conditions of the objects of visual perception. But these differences can still be aspects of the intentionality of experience: what is given or conveyed to the subject in experience. (Crane 2014, 16)

Crane here suggests that certain aspects of the presented content of perceptual experience have to be non-propositional. Propositional contents are truth-evaluable contents and for that reason also intersubjectively shareable. For example, my perceptual experience may specify that there is a pig in the garden, which is a propositional content that can be true or false and had by others. Crane acknowledges that perceptual intentionality has, in part, such a propositional structure. But he contests that all the details of the perceptually represented content would be of such a kind.

The examples Crane uses are virtually the same ones used by Crane (1988, 1992), Dretske (1995) and Peacocke (2002) discussed earlier. Crane's motives for explaining the examples he gives in terms of non-propositional content

are, I think, the same motives Peacocke (2002) has for calling them non-representational. On Peacocke's, Crane's and Husserl's picture, blurred vision or objects in shadow can be explained by reference to (what Husserl calls) the really inhering contents (hyle plus noesis). The changes there subsequently have their effects mirrored on the side of what is intended – an object as appearing blurred or an object as appearing in different color shades.

I think Crane's (2014) example clearly indicates that an exclusively propositional articulation of the presented content is at least phenomenologically speaking inadequate. As the earlier expositions of hyle and act-processes revealed, Husserl offers very similar resources to argue against that. On Husserl's account, perceptual intentionality always involves an intended object – for instance the pig in the garden that I perceive – and simultaneously really inherent contents – those that are directly impressed upon consciousness due to it being presented to me perceptually and from one side (one 'adumbration'). The latter contents are phenomenologically speaking not of a kind that can be true or false or shareable with others. They do not present something as something, but are really inherent in consciousness.

Besides this, Husserl might, however, have a more profound case to make against propositional content that I want to examine in a bit more detail here. To understand it, it is useful to look beyond the general structure of intentionality. A concrete act of perception, for instance, on Husserl's account, is not just a matter of hyle, noesis, ego, and noema as discussed so far. Husserl believes that actual episodes of perception in their full complexity do not conform neatly to these four abstract categories. To list a few examples, Husserl holds that perceptual intentionality is shaped by the immediate context of possible bodily movements, one's point of orientation, possible future actions, the normative setting, one's practical concerns, one's personal cultural history, one's familiarized habits, and one's personality.<sup>21</sup> Husserl does not always analyze these dimensions in terms of the noesis/noema-model, because their complexity often makes them ill-suited to fit that model.

From a Husserlian viewpoint, one's personal experiential history must, among other factors, be said to determine the presented content in any given perceptual episode. Consider, again, seeing a pig in the garden. On Husserl's picture, upon seeing a pig in the garden, my familiarity with pigs, my past practical engagements with them, my cultural background, etc. inevitably shape the way the pig is presented to me. *Just* seeing a pig in the garden is an abstraction; I always see something that affects me, entices me to act, and to move – motivations that are in turn partially determined by my practical concerns, my past experiences, my cultural upbringing, and so on. I might, for instance, be frightened of the pig due to certain past encounters, be vaguely reminded of a game I once played, or it might make me hungry. These enticements, motivations, and passive associations belong in various different ways to the contents intentional consciousness makes available to me. Yet it is hard to maintain that, in terms

of their distinctive phenomenology, they are available to me and to others in the very same way the fact that there is a pig in the garden is accessible to me and to others.

To be sure, on Husserl's account, any other person may see the same pig in the garden as I do, thereby undergoing an experience with the same propositionally articulable content. Husserl acknowledges that 'whatever in our individual and communal activities has achieved sense and form [...] is a constituent of existence accessible to everyone' (Husserl 1974, 20). This is broadly because, for Husserl, as for instance for McDowell (1996), perception is 'impregnated by the precipitate of logical operations' (Husserl 1997, 42). The world of experience is always a field of 'possible substrates of cognitive activities' (Husserl 1997, 37). The world, Husserl maintains, is inevitably structured in ways that make it fit for the propositional language of judgment.

Perceptual experience thus at least partially serves to make truth-evaluable contents available and usually does so successfully. But such propositional contents are ultimately only ideal abstractions from the concrete perceptual episode, whose conveyed meaning is deeply shaped by personal experiential history, familiarized habits, and so on – meaning structures which bear no obvious similarities to propositional structures. To say, as Husserl does, that my perception of a pig makes propositional contents available does not involve the commitment that all the ways in which my experience informs me about the pig would have the right phenomenological structure to be propositionally explicable. While anyone can see the same pig in the garden, *no one* will see the pig *exactly* the way I do. From a Husserlian viewpoint, perceptually presented contents never entirely fit the language of judgment, which is due ultimately to the 'necessarily developmental character' (Husserl 1980, 15) of each streaming life of consciousness, which guarantees that the perceptual contents had by different ego-subjects are uniquely shaped by the imprints of past experiences.

Husserl can account for these phenomenological observations regarding perceptual intentionality simply by granting that certain aspects of perceptual representation are non-propositional in structure. There is, it seems to me, nothing contradictory or otherwise disturbing about the idea of non-propositional contents. Intentionalism, by contrast, at least as I have spoken of it, seems burdened with the task of offering an account of how these and other phenomenological insights are to be made comprehensible on the basis of an exclusively propositional articulation of intentionality.

## Notes

1. See Byrne (2001, 199), Crane (2009, 475–477), and Marcus (2006, 321).
2. The distinction at stake is between what is standardly called strong and weak representationalism (e.g. Bayne 2010, 52; Lycan 2015; Crane 2009 speaks of strong pure intentionalism vs. weak pure intentionalism instead). Whereas strong representationalists such as Tye (1995, 2002) and Lycan (2001) maintain

that phenomenal character can be reduced to or is identical with the objective properties represented, weak representationalists hold that the former is determined by or supervenes upon the latter. The dispute is primarily ontological and therefore of little concern throughout the rest of my paper, which deals exclusively with intentionalism and intentionality as ways of modeling consciousness.

3. See especially Bermúdez (1994, 1995, 2011) and Peacocke (2001a, 2001b). For debates about the dichotomy between conceptual and non-conceptual content, see Speaks (2005), Toribio (2007), and Van Mazijk (2015).
4. See especially McDowell (1994, 1996, 2009, 2013).
5. See for instance Loar (1988).
6. See Putnam (1975), Burge (1979, 1986).
7. Alternative views are also common, for instance Stoljar (2007), who specifies intentionalism as a theory of supervenience of the mental onto the physical.
8. See especially Harman (1990), Martin (2002), and Tye (2002). See also Pace (2007) for an elaborate criticism of the transparency thesis.
9. See Husserl (1970, 193; 1977, 170; 2002, 270–271).
10. See Husserl (1974, 43; 1960, 117).
11. See especially Husserl (1977, 166–170).
12. In *Ideas I*, Husserl introduces noesis and hyle separately as distinct notions, even though in a later footnote (Husserl 1983, 213) it is noted that the hyle is a component of the noesis. I will not go into these details any further.
13. See also Lycan (2015) for more on that ambiguity.
14. See Husserl (1983, 237).
15. I will not go into detail here, but see McKenna (1984) and Marcelle (2011) for overviews or Gurwitsch (2010) for an early critique.
16. See Dretske (1995, 14–15).
17. See for instance Lycan's (2015) treatment of Nickel's (2006) argument for non-conceptual content for a nice example of how representationalists try to reduce all content to representational content.
18. See especially van Mazijk (2016) for a more detailed analysis of the role of the ego in attentive and non-attentive perception.
19. The exact status of the noema has seen considerable debate over the past decades (Follesdal 1969; McIntyre and Smith 1989; Willard 1992; Mohanty 1992; Drummond 1992; Zahavi 2004, 2008). Although I cannot elaborate the point here, it is my view that Husserl's transcendental idealism does not consider intentional objects to be radically separate from consciousness. In this respect at least, Husserl's position appears to differ from Crane (2009), who has a more realist take on intentional objects – even though he claims to side with Husserl on the issue.
20. Husserl's concept of intentionality as a being directed toward transcendent objects also bears on discussions on intentional inexistence and the problem of intending non-existent objects. For Husserl, intentionality is not a relation between a subject and empirical facts of the objective environment but rather a directedness that is inherent to consciousness itself. I cannot discuss this issue in detail here, but see Moran (2000, 43–48), Crane (2006) and Kriegel (2007) for some recent discussions.
21. For more on Husserl's work on bodily movement, see: Carman (1999) and Bower (2014). For more on perceptual normativity, see: Crowell (2013), Jansen (2015), and Doyon (2015). For more on passive familiarity and personality, see: Moran (2011, 2014) and Lohmar (2003, 2014).

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