

# Consciousness and Intentionality: The Face of the Phenomena

KRISTJAN LAASIK

Shandong University – School of Philosophy and Social Development, Shanda Nanlu,  
Zhixin Lou Block A, Jinan, Shandong, China 250100  
klaasik@gmail.com

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE – RECEIVED: 24/10/14 ACCEPTED: 03/12/15

---

**ABSTRACT:** In his book *The Significance of Consciousness*, Charles Siewert argues that some of our phenomenal features are intentional features, because we are assessable for accuracy in virtue of having these phenomenal features. In this paper, I will, first, show that this argument stands in need of disambiguation, and will emerge as problematic on both available readings. Second, I will use Thomas Szanto's recent ideas to develop a deeper understanding of the difficulties with Siewert's argument. Szanto emphatically contrasts the Husserlian, constitutive conception of intentionality with the mainstream, representational conception. If we interpret Siewert's ideas in representational terms, it will be possible to add to my critical objections. However, I will suggest that it is also possible to interpret, or perhaps to modify, Siewert's views in Husserlian constitutive terms, thereby addressing the objections raised in the present paper.

**KEY WORDS:** Charles Siewert, consciousness, Edmund Husserl, intentionality, perception, phenomenology.

---

## I

In his book *The Significance of Consciousness*, Charles Siewert argues that some of our phenomenal features are intentional features, because we are assessable for accuracy in virtue of having these phenomenal features. In this paper, I will, first, show that this argument stands in need of disambiguation, and will emerge as problematic on both available readings. Second, I will use Thomas Szanto's recent ideas to develop a deeper understanding of the difficulties with Siewert's argument. Szanto emphatically contrasts the Husserlian, constitutive conception of intentionality with the mainstream, representational conception. If we interpret Siewert's ideas in representational

terms, it will be possible to add to my critical objections. However, I will suggest that it is also possible to interpret, or perhaps to modify, Siewert's views in Husserlian constitutive terms, thereby addressing the objections raised in the present paper.

When Siewert argues that some of our phenomenal features are intentional features, this identity claim can be read in two ways. On *the first reading*, some phenomenal features of the *subjects* of visual experience are intentional features. Here, a phenomenal feature is one's being in a mental state with a phenomenal character, and an intentional feature is one's being in a mental state with intentional content (or intentional character).<sup>1</sup> On *the second reading*, some phenomenal features of *visual experiences* are intentional features. Here, the phenomenal features are the phenomenal characters of the visual experiences, and the intentional features are their intentional contents. The first reading is the weaker, being closely associated with the idea that our visual experiences have both intentional content and phenomenal character, and there is a close connection between the two, viz., a supervenience or dependence relation. The second reading is the stronger, requiring that visual experiences have phenomenal characters which are identical with their contents.

I will highlight this ambiguity, because it seems to compromise Siewert's argument, and Siewert's views are an important contribution to the ongoing debates about the relation between consciousness and intentionality. In these debates, the relevant notion of consciousness is usually explicated as what it is like for a subject to have a certain mental state, while intentionality is generally understood as a mental state's or linguistic expression's being about, or being directed to, some object or state of affairs. There has been a recent surge in views, according to which we have "phenomenal intentionality", i.e., a kind of intentionality that is necessarily conscious, and that we have "in virtue of" being conscious. Siewert's views are an early contribution to this line of thinking, and have not lost their relevance today.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I use "intentional character" as an alternative to the perhaps more theoretically loaded "content".

<sup>2</sup> For a recent collection of papers on phenomenal intentionality, see Kriegel (2013). For an overview of the issues, see Kriegel (2013: Ch. 1). Several papers on Siewert's *The Significance of Consciousness*, with Siewert's responses, can be found in *Psyche*, 7 (2001) and 8 (2002), available at [http://www.theassoc.org/journal\\_psyche](http://www.theassoc.org/journal_psyche).

Terence Horgan and John Tienson refer to Siewert's views in endnotes 15, 16, and 22, to section 3 of their seminal paper "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality" (Horgan and Tienson 2002: 524–526). In their recent critique of Horgan and Tienson's paper, Andrew Bailey and Bradley Richards allege that Horgan and Tienson have, in fact, provided no arguments to the effect that the content of perceptual experiences is in some way dependent on their phenomenal nature, and "provide no guidance as to where such reasons might be sought" (Bailey and Richards 2014: 317). This is somewhat uncharitable, since, in endnote 15, Horgan and Tienson speak of Siewert's discussion, in Siewert (1998:

However, I will also argue that Siewert's argument runs into difficulties even on the first reading, viz., not arguing for the outright identity of the phenomenal and intentional characters. I will be painting in very broad brush strokes, aiming to promote a dialogue between contemporary philosophy of mind and Husserlian phenomenology. I am, of course, not alone in considering these issues with such aims in mind. Aspects of the consciousness-intentionality debate have already been discussed from the point of view of Husserlian phenomenology, with Thomas Szanto's monograph being an outstanding recent contribution.<sup>3</sup> Szanto distinguishes the Husserlian view of intentionality from what he calls the representational, or referential, view. According to the latter view, conceived in very general terms, mental states are intentional in the sense that they are directed to, or related to, external objects. On the Husserlian view, by contrast, intentionality is not conceived in terms of representing, or referring to, external objects. Neither are the objects internal to consciousness. Rather, objectivity, in the sense of presence, is constituted within consciousness, a process that is rightly conceived without recourse to an external object, or a thing in itself, except as a principle that guides the process, akin to a Kantian regulative idea.<sup>4</sup> We conceive of the presence of the object in terms of a kind of harmonious series of appearances, or experiences, with the idea of an object depending on our sense that the harmonious series could, in principle, be pursued infinitely, without a rupture or a breakdown.

This is a familiar understanding of the Husserlian view. However, it is important that Szanto has contrasted it with the prevalent approaches in the analytic philosophy of mind, made his point with due emphasis and discussed its various implications. I shall therefore draw upon his work in the present paper. The scope of my discussion will be limited to the topic of perceptual experiences; I will set aside issues pertaining to the putative "cognitive phenomenology" of judgment and thought.

## II

In this section of my paper I propose, first, to present Siewert's argument and clarify some of its central aspects, second, to discuss what I take to be an am-

---

Ch. 7 and 8), as "complementary" to theirs, and thus seem to regard themselves as dividing philosophical labor with Siewert – an indication of which Bailey and Richards do not seem to have taken notice.

<sup>3</sup> Niels Weidtmann, too, has contributed to the debate, viz., as, in his paper, he provides an overview of the argument of Horgan and Tienson (2002), and argues that Husserl's view is significantly different from Horgan and Tienson's (Weidtmann 2010: 97–102, especially 102). Szanto's account of Husserl's view seems in basic agreement with Weidtmann's.

<sup>4</sup> For a contrast of the two kinds of views, see Szanto (2012: 45–46).

biguity in the argument, and, third, to offer criticisms of the disambiguated versions of the argument.

I will begin by presenting what, based on chapters 6 and 7 in Siewert's book, I take to be an adequate reconstruction of Siewert's argument.

- (1) If we are assessable for accuracy in virtue of phenomenal features, then these phenomenal features are intentional features.
- (2) We are, indeed, assessable for accuracy in virtue of phenomenal features.
- (3) Therefore, these phenomenal features are intentional features.

Let us take a closer look at the pivotal phrase "in virtue of". Siewert introduces it to highlight the contrast between the way linguistic utterances and perceptual experiences are assessable for accuracy (Siewert 1998: 190). Uttering "u" is a feature "with respect to" which we are assessable for accuracy, provided that "u" is supplied with an interpretation. Siewert argues that no such interpretation is needed in the case of beliefs or perceptual experiences. He makes this view precise as follows,

[A] feature is one in virtue of which its possessor is assessable for truth or accuracy just in case: from the possession of that feature it follows that there is some condition, the satisfaction of which, together with one's possession of that feature, entails some correlative assessment for truth or accuracy, though that condition need not include anything we can rightfully count as an interpretation of that feature. To put this a bit more precisely, we might say that a statement S of the form ". . . x . . . F . . ." is the attribution to x of an intentional feature, when the following holds. If S is true, then it follows that there is some condition C, such that, *first*, if S is true and C obtains, then either: what x F's is true (or false); or x F's truly (or falsely); or x F's accurately (or inaccurately); or the way it F's to x is accurate (or inaccurate). And *second*, it is not the case that C's obtaining furnishes the feature attributed to x in S with an interpretation (Ibid.: 192).

Notice that the idea of assessability for accuracy, in virtue of a certain feature, is here conceived in negative terms, viz., the relevant feature is such that it renders the subject assessable for accuracy *without* the feature's needing to be interpreted. Siewert does not give a positive account of "in virtue of". As for the ideas of interpretation, and "interpreting conditions", Siewert does not provide a definition in general terms, but invites the reader to accept these ideas on an intuitive basis, viz., by consulting their sense of the differences between a linguistic utterance, on one hand, and assertion, belief, and vision, on the other (Ibid.).

Such assessability for accuracy, as can be seen from the above block quotation, is regarded by Siewert as a sufficient condition for a feature's being an intentional feature. In fact, Siewert never develops a more detailed view of

intentionality in his book, so as not to make “too many initial assumptions about the philosophical questions and disputes surrounding it”, and so as not to get bogged down in theoretical discussions over technicalities (Ibid.: 188). He avoids talk of “content”,

[W]e possess too little pretheoretical notion of what “content” is supposed to be that is clearly broad enough to give us a useful means of characterizing intentionality, and the notion of content is so much shaped by its use in theories devoted to obscure issues we oughtn’t to prejudge, that it does not serve as a helpful starting point (Ibid.: 188–189).

With these clarifications in mind, let us put a stamp of legitimacy on the reconstruction we began with. It clearly captures the content of the following statement of Siewert’s, expressing his view regarding the case of the phenomenal feature of its looking to one as if there is something X-shaped in a certain position,

[I]f it seems to you as it does for it to look this way, then, if it is also the case that there is something X-shaped in a certain position, it follows that the way it looks to you is accurate. That this follows is enough ... to make the phenomenal feature in question an intentional feature (Ibid.: 221).

Let us move on. Until now, our discussion has not taken up Siewert’s notion of a phenomenal feature, allowing the reader to assume, based on what was said in the introduction, that it may, in some way, be regarded in terms of what it is like to be in a mental state. However, rather than merely taking over the phrase “what it is like” from other philosophers’ discussions, Siewert, in chapter 7, explains that, “[t]he phenomenal character of vision is how it seems for it to look some way to someone”, and also expresses the view that differences in phenomenal character can be known with “first-person warrant” (Ibid.: 219).

I believe that Siewert’s use of the phrases “phenomenal feature” and “intentional feature” is ambiguous, along the lines of the two readings that I have sketched in the introduction, and that this needs to be taken into account in critically assessing Siewert’s argument. On *the first reading*, some phenomenal features of the *subjects* of visual experience are intentional features. On *the second reading*, some phenomenal features of *visual experiences* are intentional features, i.e., phenomenal characters of visual experiences are identical with their intentional characters.

In the context of Siewert’s argument, the uses of “phenomenal feature” and “intentional feature” need to correlate with each other. He, however, uses these terms variously. On one hand, in some passages, the relevant intentional features are regarded beside features of being in mental states like meaning something or believing something (Ibid.: 192). Elsewhere, however,

he indicates that the phenomenal features he has in mind are those of having a certain phenomenal character (Ibid.: 219), and, more particularly, that such are the phenomenal features that he believes to be assessable for accuracy and therefore to be intentional features (Ibid.: 221–222).

These observations are relevant to understanding and assessing Siewert's argument, insofar as the first reading yields the weaker conclusion, viz., some version of the idea that our visual experiences involve both phenomenal characters and intentional characters that are closely interconnected, and the second reading, the stronger conclusion, viz., (some) phenomenal characters are identical with intentional characters. Basically, if we adopt *the first reading*, the argument will need to prevail against the idea that visual experiences are not intrinsically intentional, but require an extrinsic interpretation, a judgment that confers intentionality upon them. If we adopt *the second reading*, we will need to provide reasons for the identity claim to be accepted over any alternative views on which visual experiences' phenomenal and intentional characters are distinct.

It seems to me that, insofar as Siewert puts forward explicit arguments for his view, he argues for the stronger claim (based on *the second reading*) by deploying arguments that, if successful, would support the weaker claim (based on *the first reading*). The following illustrates this: “[T]here is just no such job [of interpretation] that needs doing. The phenomenal character of visual experience does not need to be supplied with intentionality by adding interpreting conditions, because it already has intentionality,” he claims, then adding that, on the contrary view, “visual phenomenal features would be, in a fashion, assimilated to linguistic utterances” (Ibid.: 222). Yet, surely, they would not be like linguistic utterances if we granted that they had intentional content that was intrinsic to them, but distinct from their phenomenal character.

In the present treatment, we will set aside many of the details of Siewert's arguments. Let it be noted that, in chapter 7, he provides extensive arguments to the effect that we cannot “take the intentional out of the phenomenal” (Ibid.: 217). In effect, this means arguing for the claim that the intentional supervenes on the phenomenal, notably, by arguing against the notion of sense data, and by considering different versions of the view that a judgment is needed to invest visual experiences with intentionality (Ibid.: 234–241). As far as I can see, *all of this* only contributes to the defence of the weaker of the two claims. In order to pass critical judgment on Siewert's argument, we must, at this point, disambiguate it, and consider whether the disambiguation yields a sound argument that makes an interesting point.

If we interpret Siewert's argument as based on *the first reading*, then Siewert basically argues that visual experiences are intentional, without there

needing to be an additional act of interpretation, or an interpretative judgment, to confer intentionality upon them. There is no such job to be done, unlike in the case of linguistic expressions (Ibid.: 222). If the argument is construed in this way, I have no objections to the first premise, but I wish to argue, for now, that there is an alternative to the view expressed in the second premise. (I will continue this critical discussion in the next section.)

Siewert argues for the second premise by inviting the readers to accept that it is clearly not the case that “the way it feels to have a sensation does not, any more than the shapes or sounds of language do, constrain the ‘interpretation’...” (Ibid.: 234).<sup>5</sup> He notes that linguistic expressions refer arbitrarily, based on an interpretation that assigns a reference to them. We are free to pick and choose the reference. It appears that we have no such freedom in regard to our visual experiences, which seem, by their nature, to be about a red, rather than a blue object, an X-shaped, rather than a Y-shaped object.

Siewert only clarifies the notion of interpretation by invoking the intuitive difference between a linguistic expression, on one hand, and assertion, belief, and vision, on the other (Ibid.: 192). In essence, he invites us to agree that in one case there is room for a free choice of a referent and in the other case there is not. However, granting that there is no such unconstrained free choice in the case of visual experiences, it is still possible to consider whether we could speak of an interpretation here in the more general sense of an assignment of reference. As a matter of psychology, the assignment of reference might not be by free choice, it might be subject to constraints, and the person might not even be able to conceive of any alternative interpretations. This could be ruled out if we had a positive conception of how phenomenal features render visual experiences assessable for accuracy, as part of the very nature of visual experiences. However, Siewert never gives us a positive conception of this “in virtue of”.

It seems to me that the burden of proof is on us here, rather than on Siewert. Clearly, people cannot freely pick and choose the reference of their visual experiences. If we do not accept that visual experiences are referential by their very nature, we need to have an account of how some non-referential feature places a constraint on how they can be interpreted. I will provide such an account in the next section, having introduced the relevant Husserlian ideas.

If we interpret Siewert’s argument in terms of *the second reading* of the notions of a phenomenal and an intentional feature, then Siewert is arguing that the phenomenal character of our visual experiences is identical with their

---

<sup>5</sup> This claim, viz., that phenomenal features constrain their interpretation, is rather similar to the above supervenience claim, or a version thereof.

intentional character.<sup>6</sup> It seems to me that on this reading, Siewert's second premise is unsupported, for two reasons.

The mainstream view is that visual experiences have a phenomenal character and intentional content, and these two kinds of properties are distinguished to address various philosophical concerns. Siewert, of course, pursues a philosophical approach that is particularly sensitive to first-person considerations (Ibid.: 187), while aiming to avoid excessive philosophical theorizing. We have learned that he shuns the notion of content because we have "too little pretheoretical notion of what 'content' is supposed to be..." (Ibid.: 188). Siewert elsewhere regards this as largely a terminological point (Siewert 2002: 4 of 19), but it is not, if by eliminating the term we also invalidate the philosophical concerns that have led to its widespread use, thereby foregrounding first-person considerations and providing support for Siewert's view. My point is that Siewert has provided no argument for so privileging the "pretheoretical", and the first-person perspective, over other philosophical considerations.

Suppose that Siewert holds the view that our account of visual experiences should be developed entirely from the first-person perspective, or based on first-person warrant. But then, *prima facie* at least, his view would seem to be inconsistent. This is my second point. The putative first-personal view seems inconsistent, because it incorporates a conception of perceptual states as assessable for accuracy. Accuracy does not appear to be a first-person notion.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it straddles experience and reality, relating a first-person fact, concerning the first-person perspective, to a third-person fact, the way things

---

<sup>6</sup> This claim is criticized in Ludwig (2002) and Thomasson (2002). Siewert replies to these criticisms in Siewert (2002). I will pursue lines different from Thomasson's and Ludwig's.

<sup>7</sup> Yet, Horgan and Tienson write,

"[The] occurrent states in the phenomenal duplicate, by virtue of having the same phenomenologically determined truth conditions as yours, are thereby subject to the same methods of accuracy assessment: for instance, you and your phenomenological duplicate might each experience turning around to see if the picture is still crooked. If it still appears crooked, you might then experience going through the tests mentioned above. The possibility of such tests is in some sense understood, if not explicitly phenomenologically given, in having the conscious belief that there is a picture hanging crooked behind oneself" (Horgan and Tienson 2002: 525).

One natural reply to this is that phenomenal states have phenomenologically determined truth conditions and are subject to methods of accuracy assessment, provided that one has a conception of accuracy and regards the experience in light of it. Otherwise, turning around to see if the picture is still crooked, will not amount to a test for accuracy but to what Husserl speaks of as "fulfillment", i.e., confirmation in the course of the harmonious unfolding of experience, without recourse to the idea of the experience in some way matching what we might call a thing in itself.



really are. Siewert, it would seem, cannot dismiss third-person, theoretical considerations on the grounds that his is a purely first-person account.

That said, it is, of course, possible that Siewert does not aim to develop his view of visual experiences (based on *the second reading*) entirely from the first-person point of view, and that he is merely putting forward a view that enables him to address his philosophical concerns, rather than arguing that either these concerns take precedence over others, or that his view is better supported than others. However, if he is arguing for his views, then my objections cannot just be circumvented.

### III

Thomas Szanto has recently argued that, on the Husserlian view, intentionality is to be regarded in constitutive, rather than representational terms. I will use his ideas in discussing the difficulties with Siewert's argument. I accept Szanto's view, based on the arguments he provides, and will not attempt to critically evaluate it in the present paper.<sup>8</sup> Rather, I will start by a brief exposition of his views, with a focus on the distinction between the two conceptions of intentionality. I would add that, in chapter 1 of his monograph, Szanto gives a critical overview of the contemporary debates about the relations between consciousness and intentionality, and he contrasts the mainstream approaches with Husserl's, but he does not go on to use the Husserlian ideas to develop critical objections to views like Siewert's. I believe my purposes to be complementary to Szanto's.

In a chapter 1 of his monograph, Szanto describes the representational (or referential) approach, as one according to which mental representations that are internal to consciousness, stand for items that are essentially external to consciousness, and the relation between them is interpreted in naturalistic terms, as being one of extensional-referential determination and/or causal dependence (Szanto 2012: 45). He primarily has in mind here certain influential representationalist views that have been developed with the aim of reductively naturalizing intentionality, raising, for us, the question of how generally the label "representationalism" is meant to apply. Helpfully, in contrasting this with the Husserlian conception, he quotes what he regards as an anti-representationalist statement by Husserl, thereby clarifying the matter,

[I]t makes no sense at all to speak of things as if they were simply there and need only to be seen. For this "simply being there" is a matter of certain experiences of a specific and changing structure, such as perception, imagination, memory, predication, etc.; and things are in them not as they might be in a case or con-

---

<sup>8</sup> For a critical discussion, see Soldati (2014).

tainer, rather, things *constitute themselves* in these experiences even though they are not to be found in them in the real [*reellen*] sense. For “things to be given” is for them to *present* themselves (to be represented) [*vorgestellt sein*] as such in these phenomena. And this does not mean that the things are once again there for themselves and then “send their representatives into consciousness.” [...] Rather, things exist, and exist in appearance, and are themselves given by virtue of appearance... (Husserl 1999: 68)

A very general distinction is being made here by Husserl, providing a context for Szanto’s remarks on the representationalist naturalistic approaches in the analytic philosophy of mind. On one hand, we have a view on which mental states are directed to, or related to, external objects. On the other hand, we have a view on which objectivity (as presence) is conceived as an aspect of intentional experience.<sup>9</sup> According to the first view, we start with some version of a dichotomy of the mind and the world, while based on the second view our starting point is intentional experience, as a unified whole. The first kind of view can, but need not be worked out in reductive, naturalistic terms. It can, but need not be developed as a mediate, or indirect, view of intentionality, where representations are introduced as entities mediating between the mind and the world. It can be ontologically committed to the existence of representations as entities in the mind, or it can be non-committal in this regard. E.g., Searle’s view of intentionality is ontologically non-committal about representations, but counts as representational (or referential), for Szanto, because it conceives of intentionality in terms of “conditions of satisfaction”, or what it would take for there to be a fit, or a match, between the mind and the world (Szanto 2012: 110–112). The constitution of objectivity, by contrast with such views, is rightly understood as the idea that the givenness of the object is conceived in terms of its persistence, or identity, in various acts of consciousness that can be directed to it (Ibid.: 54).

Since, on the Husserlian approach, we are investigating intentional experiences, as just described, the phenomenal features of experiences are not necessarily segregated from the objects of the experiences, but can form part of our conception of (the given) objectivity,

Phenomenality, in phenomenology’s sense, thus, does *not* describe a *metaintentional* property of consciousness, i.e., a property that would accrue to entities (and especially to conscious events) *beside*, or would, so to speak, be “detachable” from, their intentional properties. It describes, rather, the specific (inten-

---

<sup>9</sup> We are, indeed, painting with a very broad brush here. In contemporary debates over intentionality, a fundamental distinction is made between the representational and relational views of intentionality. We, however, are grouping these views together and distinguishing them from the Husserlian view.

tional) way of givenness, of the objectivities of consciousness, for the respective subject of an intentional consciousness-experience (Ibid.: 51).<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the phenomenal should not be regarded as the subjective what-it-is-like.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the object is conceived as phenomenal, as the “phenomenon” (Ibid.: 50). Moreover, Szanto argues that we have no conception of a pre-intentional phenomenal sphere, and Husserl’s discussion of the sensuous matter (*hyle*) needs to be understood in the context of the functioning of such sensuous matter, as part of the intentional experience, towards the givenness of objectivity.<sup>12</sup> While we can, in a kind of provisional way, differentiate between consciousness as object-directedness, and consciousness as phenomenal consciousness (or the what-it-is-like), on closer scrutiny the two conceptions will reveal themselves as expressing the same view (Ibid., 55).

For the purposes of this paper, I will simply accept Szanto’s central distinction between the representational and constitutive conceptions of intentionality. While aspects of the way he elaborates some of the details, notably, the claim that there is no pre-intentional phenomenal sphere, seem, *prima facie*, contentious, I shall set aside such issues. Instead, let us return to the objections raised earlier against the two versions of Siewert’s argument, for further discussion. Concerning the version based on *the first reading* of “phenomenal feature” and “intentional feature”, we have appealed to the possibility of interpretation under constraints. Based on the Husserlian distinction between two conceptions of intentionality, we can now elaborate this point. Since Siewert conceives of intentionality in terms of assessability for accuracy, it would be quite natural to assume that he, like Searle, is committed to a kind of representational account, drastically different from the Husserlian view. From the Husserlian perspective, it can be argued that it is “natural” and psychologically compelling to regard a visual experience as referring to a red, X-shaped object, rather than a blue, Y-shaped one, because an object is *constituted* in our visual experience as red and X-shaped. However, on our Husserlian conception, the idea of representation, or reference, as it has been

---

<sup>10</sup> “Phänomenalität im Sinne der Phänomenologie bezeichnet also *keine* metaintentionale Bewusstseins Eigenschaft, das heisst keine Eigenschaft, die Entitäten (und insbesondere Bewusstseinsvorkommnissen) *neben* ihren intensionalen Eigenschaften zukommen würde oder von diesen gleichsam, ablösbar’ wäre. Sie bezeichnet vielmehr die spezifische (intentionale) Art und Weise der Gegebenheit von Bewusstseinsgegenständlichkeiten für ein jeweiliges Subjekt eines intentionalen Bewusstseins erlebnisses” (Szanto 2012: 51).

<sup>11</sup> Emiliano Trizio, too, has argued that accepting the Nagelian conception is, from the Husserlian perspective, unacceptable – since to accept it “means to be situated, *from the outset*, in the natural attitude” (Trizio 2012: 6 of 15).

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 45, Szanto (2012: 52–53). James Mensch discusses the constitutive functioning of sensations, as providing a kind of functionalist account of consciousness (Mensch 2003: Ch. V). Drawing upon Mensch’s ideas, Frank Steffen also discusses this view. See Steffen (2010).

sketched above, is not drawn from the experience itself, but is a construction put upon the experience. One can mistake presentation in experience for representation, and therefore believe that visual experiences are intrinsically intentional in the sense of the representational conception. In other words, the Husserlian account captures how we all have a sense of how objects present themselves in visual experience, and it also helps us understand how it can be quite natural for us to think that the visual experience picks out, or refers to, an external object.

To object to Siewert's argument, as disambiguated based on the *first reading* of "phenomenal feature" and "intentional feature", we needed an account of how some non-referential feature places a constraint on how visual experiences can be interpreted. But now we have such an account, viz., involving the Husserlian constitutive conception of intentionality, providing an alternative to Siewert's view. It seems to me that, in a very general way, we have seen that once one accepts the representationalist or the accuracy-based view of intentionality, the distinction between intrinsic and non-intrinsic intentionality becomes rather tenuous. If we start with the dichotomy of subjective experience and the world, there will always be a need to somehow bridge the two, whether by naturalization or by interpretation. From this perspective, there does not seem to be a great deal of difference between views according to which the act of interpretation is extrinsic to the visual experience, and views on which the content (or intentional character) of the experience "interprets" its phenomenal features. Contrast this with the Husserlian view, on which objectivity (the phenomenon!), viz., as a system of full and empty givennesses, is conceived as an aspect of the intentional experience.

In regard to *the second reading* of "phenomenal feature" and "intentional feature", we have argued that Siewert does not give us reason to accept that phenomenal features are intentional features. In other words, Siewert says that there is no distinction to be drawn between the phenomenal character and the intentional content of a visual experience, but many philosophers make such a distinction, and it seems legitimate. Siewert may regard the first-person perspective and first-person warrant as enjoying a privilege over other perspectives and considerations, yet the very idea of accuracy seems to place him beyond the purview of the first-person perspective. I believe that recourse to Szanto's discussion of the constitutive vs. representational view has helped contextualize this criticism, and I hope that it may have thereby helped win over some readers to my critical point of view.

This brings me to the end of my criticisms of Siewert's view. However, could we, in principle, also interpret Siewert's views as consonant with the Husserlian, constitutive view of intentionality, and what would be the dialectical upshot of doing so? To begin, we certainly would not be abandoning the spirit in which Siewert's book is written, viz., aiming to re-instate conscious-

ness as an important philosophical topic, over and above a narrow concern with its naturalization. While it is natural to regard the accuracy-conditional view as a kind of ghostly, emptied-out residue of the modern philosophical tradition, with its dichotomies of mind vs. world, and subject vs. object – which, I believe, would place it with the representational conceptions, as conceived by Szanto – might we, perhaps, also try to view the accuracy-conditional conception against the backdrop of Husserlian phenomenology? The idea that intentionality involves accuracy conditions would then need to be somehow clarified in terms of a Husserlian, constitutive account of the reality to which intentional states are directed, and of which they can be either true or false, either accurate or inaccurate.

However, I wish to make a more straightforward suggestion, viz., that Siewert abandon his accuracy-conditional conception of (visual) intentionality, and embrace the view that, on the constitutive account, appears the most compelling and natural, viz., a conception of (visual) intentionality in terms not of accuracy conditions but fulfilment conditions, specifying what it would take to bring to presence aspects or parts of the experienced object, e.g., as when I anticipate that the back side will look a certain way to me, if I turn the object around, or that its colour will look different if the lighting changes.<sup>13</sup>

Embracing the Husserlian view would have the consequence of undercutting the two objections to Siewert's argument, viz., the interpretation under constraints objection and the point about the apparent inconsistency of Siewert's first-personal stance. If we accept that visual contents are fulfilment conditions, it will help us understand how visual experiences have content in virtue of their phenomenal character, since the givenness of the object is accounted for in terms of series of harmonious appearances, involving phenomenally contrasting full and empty givennesses. E.g., when the back side of the apple is given emptily, in terms of my anticipations, the harmonious course of my experience will consist in its gradually coming into full view as I turn the apple around.

This view is part of a project that is pursued consistently from a first-personal stance, viz., Husserlian phenomenology. While it may well be that some other objections will prove difficult for the Husserlian approach, it will not sustain damage from the above two.

#### IV

Charles Siewert argues that some of our phenomenal features are intentional features, because we are assessable for accuracy in virtue of having these phenomenal features. I have shown that this argument trades on an ambiguity,

---

<sup>13</sup> For my take on the Husserlian fulfillment-based view, see Laasik (2014, sect. III).

and faces objections on both available readings. I have drawn upon Thomas Szanto's distinction between a constitutive and a representational conception of intentionality, to discuss the difficulties with Siewert's arguments. An interpretation of Siewert's view in representational terms has, on one hand, rendered my objections the more damaging. However, if we interpret or modify Siewert's views, based on Husserlian phenomenology, it should be possible to address the main criticisms made in the present paper.

I regard the present discussion of Siewert's view as my modest contribution to the current debates concerning the relationship between consciousness and intentionality. As I have indicated in my footnote 2, Siewert's book is seminal among the increasingly numerous texts arguing that we have phenomenal intentionality. In my paper, I have discussed ways in which our critical assessment of this seminal text can be informed by Husserlian considerations, and how such considerations may ultimately help Siewert achieve his philosophical aims.<sup>14</sup>

### Bibliography

- Bailey, A. and Richards, B. 2014. "Horgan and Tienson on Phenomenology and Intentionality", *Philosophical Studies* 167(2), 313–326.
- Horgan, T. and Tienson, J. 2002. "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality", in D. Chalmers (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Husserl, E. 1999. *The Idea of Phenomenology*, in R. Bernet (ed.), *Edmund Husserl Collected Works* Vol. VIII (Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer Academic Publishers).
- Kriegel, U. 2013. *Phenomenal Intentionality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Laasik, K.. 2014. "Constitutive Strata and the Dorsal Stream", *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 13(3), 419–435.
- Ludwig, K. 2002. "Phenomenal Consciousness and Intentionality. Comments on The Significance of Consciousness", *Psyche* 8, 1–16.
- Mensch, J. 2003. *Postfoundational Phenomenology: Husserlian Reflections on Presence and Embodiment* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press).
- Siewert, C. 2002. "Consciousness, Intentionality, and Self-Knowledge: Replies to Ludwig and Thomasson", *Psyche* 8, 1–19.

---

<sup>14</sup> Acknowledgments: I presented a draft of this paper at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Husserl Circle at Dartmouth College in May 2014. I am grateful to the participants for their questions and comments. This research was supported by Shandong University Independent Initiative Fellowship (11090073614002).

- . 1998. *The Significance of Consciousness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Soldati, G. 2014. “Thomas Szanto: Bewusstsein, Intentionalität und mentale Repräsentation. Husserl und die analytische Philosophie des Geistes”, *Husserl Studies* 30(3), 269–276.
- Steffen, F. 2010. “Konstitution der Subjektivität – Zur Funktionalisierbarkeit von Qualia aus phänomenologischer Sicht”, in P. Merz, A. Staiti, and F. Steffen (eds.), *Geist – Person – Gemeinschaft: Freiburger Beiträge zur Aktualität Husserls* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag).
- Szanto, T. 2012. *Bewusstsein, Intentionalität und mentale Repräsentation. Husserl und die analytische Philosophie des Geistes* (Berlin: De Gruyter).
- Thomasson, A. 2002. “Two Puzzles for a New Theory of Consciousness”, *Psyche* 8, 1–9.
- Trizio, E. 2012. “Husserl and the Mind-Body Problem”, *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* XI, 1–15.
- Weidtmann, N. 2010. “Phänomenales Bewusstsein und Intentionalität”, in M. Frank and N. Weidtmann (eds.), *Husserl und die Philosophie des Geistes* (Berlin: Suhrkamp).