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Stream A: Consciousness and Naturalism

Title: A new puzzle for phenomenal intentionality

Abstract: Some mental states exhibit intentionality: they are of, or about things. An account of intentionality aims to explain how mental states have this kind of intentionality. According to phenomenal intentionality theories (PITs), which have recently enjoyed significant attention, the intentionality of mental states has its basis in their phenomenology.

One familiar challenge to PITs is based on the claim that what a mental representation is about sometimes depends on facts that do not supervene on the representer's narrowly-construed psychological state. Since the phenomenology of a mental representation plausibly depends on the representer's narrow psychological state, this looks like a problem for PITs. There are, broadly speaking, two established kinds of responses to this challenge.

We present a new challenge for PITs centered on the relation of being about the same thing that stands between some mental representations. This relation is often called 'intentional identity' or 'co-intentionality'. This new challenge makes the established responses to the familiar challenge look much less attractive, and raises interesting issues of its own. Based on the options we see available, we issue a challenge to PITs: either produce a convincing answer to this problem, or risk a wholesale retreat of the aims of PITs.

Bio: Peter Clutton is a PhD student at the Australian National University working on the philosophy of mind and cognitive science, with a particular focus on consciousness and intentionality.

Bio: Alexander Sandgren is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Australian National University. His research primarily concerns philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and metaphysics focusing on issues concerning intentionality, communication, and mental and linguistic content.