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*Intentional object and intentional content – ambiguities hidden in phenomenalist-intentionalist account of experience*

The contemporary debate on perception, and on experience generally, is concerned with establishing the nature of content of mental acts. Briefly, intentionalists (Dretske, Harman) hold that content of experience is “wide” or it is the so-called intentional content. It means that content of conscious act is determined by something more than the act itself, it is constituted by the objects of external reality. Because of that intentionalists holds that the content of the act is in fact the object of the act, chiefly the one of physical nature. This consequence serves as a base for the substantial argument against the intentionalist view on experience which was developed by phenomenals (e.g., Block, Nagel). The phenomenalist critic intends to show that mental content cannot be understood as intentional (and physical), but rather as intrinsic feature of conscious act.

The goal of my presentation is to argue that while dealing with the issues concerning content of experience intentionalist and phenomenalist accounts are full of obscurities and misunderstandings. In order to do that I will address the issue of the two notions which are commonly used interchangeably in this debate, namely, the notion of intentional content and the notion of intentional object. Firstly, I intend to argue that there are serious reasons for differentiating the intentional object from intentional content. Secondly, I will present the ambiguous use of the term “intentional object” within both phenomenalist and intentionalist approaches to experience. Lastly, I would like to show that the attempt to consider the notions of intentional content and intentional object in categories of mental and physical or in the categories of external and internal is based on wrong assumptions.