

## **Forthcoming in Philosophical Studies**

# **TRANSPARENCY, QUALIA REALISM AND REPRESENTATIONALISM**

In this essay, I want to take another look at the phenomenon of transparency and its relevance to qualia realism and representationalism. I don't suppose that what I have to say will cause those who disagree with me to change their minds, but I hope not only to clarify my position and that of others who are on my side of the debate but also to respond to various criticisms and objections that have arisen over the last ten to fifteen years or so.

### **1. The Transparency Thesis**

I begin with four quotations, two from G.E. Moore, one from Gilbert Harman, and one from an earlier paper of mine:

"...that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us; it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent — we look through it and see nothing but the blue . . ." (Moore, 1903; 446).

"When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous" (Moore, 1903; p. 450).

"When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she

experience any features of anything as intrinsic features of her experiences. And that is true of you too...Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict that you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the tree..." (Harman 1990, p. 667).

"Standing on the beach in Santa Barbara a couple of summers ago on a bright sunny day, I found myself transfixed by the intense blue of the Pacific Ocean. Was I not here delighting in the phenomenal aspects of my visual experience? And if I was, doesn't this show that there are visual qualia? I am not convinced. It seems to me that what I found so pleasing in the above instance, what I was focusing on, as it were, were a certain shade and intensity of the colour blue.... When one tries to focus on [the sensation of blue] in introspection one cannot help but see right through it so that what one actually ends up attending to is the real colour blue."

(Tye 1992, p. 160)

Of course, it is well known that Moore, immediately after writing the second of the above passages, went on to remark:

Yet it (consciousness) can be distinguished if we look enough, and if we know that there is something to look for. My main object in this paragraph has been to try to make the reader see it; but I fear I shall have succeeded very ill.

It is not clear whether Moore, in adding this comment, was taking back his earlier

claims or merely noting that his philosophical discussion was intended to help the reader pick out, or home in on, the referent of the term 'consciousness'.

Whatever Moore's real intention, I shall assume, for present purposes that he held the unqualified transparency thesis. As far as Harman's comments go, the only point of disagreement I have concerns his emphasis on intrinsic features. I shall return to this later.<sup>1</sup>

Generalizing from the above passages and extrapolating away from Harman's restriction to intrinsic features, the key transparency claims are as follows: in a case of normal perception, if we introspect:

- 1) We are not aware of features of our visual experience.
- 2) We are not aware of the visual experience itself.
- 3) We cannot attend to features of the visual experience.
- 4) The only features of which we are aware and to which we can attend are external features (colors and shapes of surfaces, for example).

(1), (2) and (4) are to be understood as claims about de re awareness. There is nowhere in these claims or in the quoted passages any mention of direct awareness. As far as awareness goes, the thesis is that when we try to introspect a visual experience occurring in normal perception, we are not aware of the experience or its features (intrinsic or not) period. This, I take it, is the basic thesis of transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> My own comments above were followed by some further claims I now repudiate. For some cogent criticisms of those claims, see Martin 2002. In other earlier work, I also sometimes wrote as if the thesis of transparency was best taken to be a thesis about direct awareness/attention and not a thesis about awareness/attention simpliciter. In my present view, this is too restrictive.

The basic thesis is naturally extended to cases of illusory perception and hallucination. In the case of illusion, claims (1), (2) and (3) are unchanged. (4) becomes

(4') The only features of which we are aware and to which we can attend are features experienced as (or presented as) belonging to the external particulars.

In the case of hallucinations, (4), in my view, should be replaced by

(4'') The only features of which we are aware and to which we can attend are locally un-instantiated features of a sort that, if they belong to anything, belong to external particulars.

I ignore here cases of veridical hallucinations. I also concede that (4'') is contentious; for it requires the admission that we can be aware of (and indeed attend to) un-instantiated properties. I shall return to this later. For the moment, let us restrict ourselves to cases of normal visual perception and let us take the thesis of transparency to be directed to the experiences that occur then.

## **2. Qualia Realism**

Qualia realism is the thesis that experiences have intrinsic features that are non-intentional and of which we can be directly aware via introspection. Such features are commonly known as qualia. According to the qualia realist, the phenomenal character of an experience is one and the same as the cluster of such intrinsic features.

This thesis is often coupled with the further thesis that perceptual experiences have intentional features (as Block (1990) and Shoemaker (1994) hold) but the latter claim is not a necessary part of qualia realism. Adverbialism, for example, is a form of qualia realism but, according to (standard) adverbialism, experiences do not have intentional features. I shall say something about qualia realism and the sense-datum theory later.

Qualia realism is inconsistent with transparency. So, those who accept transparency see it as providing an argument against qualia realism. Dan Stoljar demurs. He comments:

“If those who use transparency to argue against qualia realism appeal to the thesis that ....one is not aware in introspection of one’s experience, then it would be fair to say that it should be treated as presenting a paradox rather than as something to which one might look to decide between competing positions in philosophy of mind. For surely it is a datum, something on which everybody can agree, that one can be aware of one’s experience in introspection!” (Stoljar, 2004)

I disagree. The datum on which everyone should agree is that if I am having a sensation of blue then via introspection I can aware that I am having such a sensation. This is fact-awareness, not de re awareness of. I can be aware of the fact that p, aware that p, without being aware of either the particulars or the properties that comprise the fact that p or that make it a fact that p, as Fred Dretske (1999) has emphasized.

For example, sitting in the kitchen, if I hear the timer ding then I am aware that the muffins in the oven are cooked. But (facing the other direction) I am not aware of the muffins, nor the oven, nor for that matter the property of being cooked. I am aware rather of the timer (before me) and of the property of dinging.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, to suppose that it is a datum that when I introspect, I am aware (de re) of my visual experience of blue is to rule out, from the get-go, the view that having a visual experience is not a matter of standing in a relation to a mental particular but rather a matter of my instantiating the property of experiencing blue, where this view is committed to the existence of me and the property but not to such an entity as my instantiating the property of experiencing blue at the relevant time. It seems to me that we shouldn't close off that metaphysical option a priori. The adverbial theory, as it is sometimes developed, is such a position.

It is also worth noting that ordinary talk of my being aware of my experience when I introspect is neutral on the question of whether such awareness is de re. Compare:

(5) I am aware of my penchant for driving fast.

There is a natural non-de re reading of this, namely,

(6) I am aware that I have a penchant for driving fast.

Of course, I am not denying that there may be a de re reading too. Here is another example:

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<sup>2</sup> I can be aware of a concrete particular in some cases by being aware of a part of that particular. So, there is such a thing as indirect de re awareness; but it evidently is not applicable here to the case of the muffins.

(7) I am aware of your interest in fine wines.

(7) has a natural de dicto reading as

(8) I am aware that you are interested in fine wines.

### 3. Two Arguments from Transparency against Qualia Realism

The first argument, based on awareness, is very simple. It proceeds as follows:

(9) Experiences have intrinsic features that are non-intentional and of which we can be directly aware via introspection (qualia realism).

The features alluded to in (9) make up the phenomenal character of the experience.

(10) In normal perception, we cannot be aware of features of our experiences via introspection (transparency).<sup>3</sup>

So,

(11) Qualia realism is false.

The second argument, based on attention, is more complicated. One claim that might be made by the qualia realist in opposition to those who try to wield transparency against their view is that although we can't perceptually or sensorily attend to our visual experiences or their qualities, still we can cognitively attend to them. The obvious question to ask of those who hold this view is "What is cognitive attention?" According to Stoljar (2004), a person cognitively attends to something just in case she thinks about that thing. For

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<sup>3</sup> In my view, in no case of perception can we be aware of such features by introspection.

example, according to Stoljar, if I tell you that we will next attend to the second flaw in the argument, this is merely a matter of our thinking next about that flaw. Now, since, of course, we can think about our experiences and their properties -- we can debate their nature, wonder how they fit into the natural world, etc – it follows that we can attend to them.

This account of cognitive attention is a little simple-minded. A better proposal is that cognitive attention is a matter of thinking about something in a focused way. If one is thinking about something in the course of idly day-dreaming about a variety of matters, one isn't really attending to that thing. This is a consequence, it seems plausible to suppose, of the ordinary concept of attention. Here let me draw on the views of Alan R. White (1964).

According to White, the concept attending is a polymorphous concept: there are many different activities, the doing of which can in certain circumstances count as attending and yet none of which in other circumstances necessarily counts as attending. Another example of a polymorphous concept is the concept working. One can work by running or talking or sitting, but equally one can do each of these things without working.

To say that someone is attending, White claims, gives us no more idea as to what specific activities he is engaged in than to say he is working. To describe someone as attending, on this view, is to say that there is some specific activity the person is engaged in that is focused on something that occupies her (where that same activity in another context when not focused on the relevant thing does not constitute attending to it). For example, one can attend to an argument by



reading it but one can read an argument without attending to it. In the cognitive case, the activity is thinking.<sup>4</sup>

Suppose, then, that the argument from transparency, based on attention, against qualia realism is stated as follows:

(12) We cannot attend to the qualities of our visual experiences.

Therefore,

(13) Qualia realism is false.

If the argument goes this way, the qualia realist can simply reply that the premise is false; for we can cognitively attend to the qualities of our experiences. We can think about them in a focused way. Alternatively, if 'attend' in (12) means sensorily attend, then the premise is true, the qualia realist may say, but the argument is invalid.

It seems to me that this appeal to two sorts of attention misses the point. If one is aware (de re) of some entity, one's awareness directly puts one in a position/enables one to form de re cognitive attitudes with respect to that entity. After all, if one cannot even ask "What's that?" with respect to some entity directly on the basis of one's awareness, surely one isn't aware of that entity. Think about the case of distorting glass, for example. One can see something moving on the other side but one hasn't a clue what it is. The glass distorts its

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<sup>4</sup> These remarks about attention are intended to be consonant with how we ordinarily think of attention. But prima facie they do not fit very well with some scientific discussions of attention. In particular, they seem not to capture what scientists sometimes call 'diffuse' or 'ambient' attention (Pashler 1998).

shape too much. Still, in seeing the thing, one is aware of it and in being aware of it, one can at least ask “What’s that?” with respect to the thing.<sup>5</sup>

Here are some further examples.

INSERT FIGURE 1

Suppose that the moth on the tree trunk had been perfectly camouflaged. Would one then have been aware/conscious of it? Intuitively no. But why not? Because one’s awareness would not have put one directly in a position even to ask “What is that?” with respect to it. Consider now the picture below

INSERT FIGURE 2

Suppose that one fixates on the little girl in the middle holding flowers. Is one then (without moving one’s eyes) aware of the pipe the reclining man is holding

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<sup>5</sup> This test for awareness, as stated, oversimplifies minimally. Suppose, for example, you put your head around the door of my office and ask me if I’d like to go to lunch. I see your head. Do I also see you? Intuitively I do. Cases like this can be handled either by modifying the test so that the demonstrative is permitted to pick out some sufficiently large or salient part of the relevant thing or by arguing that the demonstrative can be applied directly to the thing even though only part of it is in the field of view.

As for the case of simple creatures without the capacity to form propositional attitudes, I deny that they see things around them (in the relevant sense of ‘see’). I do not deny, of course, that such creatures may register or detect things in their environments and thus see them in a weaker sense. (Those who are not as liberal in the ascription of propositional attitudes as I may wish to hold instead that the test, as proposed, is only for creatures capable of forming beliefs, etc.) )

in the lower left portion of the picture? Again I think that the intuitive answer is 'No' – and for the same reason as in the case of the perfectly camouflaged moth.

Now forming a de re cognitive attitude with respect to a thing directly on the basis of one's awareness requires attending to that thing at least in normal circumstances.<sup>6</sup> So, if one cannot attend to a thing in such circumstances, then one is not aware of that thing. This leads to the following version of the argument from transparency, based on attention, against qualia realism:

(14) If one is aware of one's visual experience or any of its qualities when one introspects, then in normal cases one can attend to one or more of those items directly on the basis of that awareness.

(15) But one cannot so attend.

So,

(16) One is not aware of one's visual experience and/or its qualities when one introspects in normal cases.

So,

(17) Qualia realism is false.

This is my preferred version of the transparency argument based on attention.

#### **4. How does Transparency support Representationalism?**

So, transparency creates trouble for qualia realism. But how does it support representationalism? If, as I believe, the transparency thesis can be

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<sup>6</sup> My own view is that this is the case in all circumstances. For a defense of this stronger claim against putative counter-examples, see Tye 2010. For present purposes, the stronger claim is not needed.

extended to cases of abnormal perception, then it follows that the qualities of which one is aware when one tries to introspect a visual experience are not qualities of the experience. What, then, are they? A plausible hypothesis is that they are qualities represented by the experience. Since these are the only qualities of which one is (and can be) aware, a further plausible hypothesis is that these are the qualities that fix or ground the phenomenal character of one's experience. If this is so, then necessarily (visual) experiences that are alike with respect to the qualities they represent are alike phenomenally. This is the most basic thesis of representationalism.<sup>7</sup>

Now property representationalism is not the only form of representationalism. A more common form is content representationalism (Tye 1995). Content representationalism, in my present view, is not supported by the phenomenon of transparency. What I want to do next is to say a few things about content representationalism and the question of how it is to best elucidated and why, in my view, it encounters difficulty where property representationalism does not.

One way to try to motivate content representationalism is by appeal to introspectible difference between experiences. This is the line Jeff Speaks takes in his 2009. He argues in this way:

(18) If two experiences differ in phenomenal character, there is an introspectible difference between them.

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<sup>7</sup> There's a complication I'm ignoring for moment. More on this later. I should also add that some representationalists (myself included) want to extend this thesis not only to all perceptual experiences but also to all experiences period.

(19) If there is an introspectible difference between two experiences, then there is a difference in the objects and properties those two experiences represent as in one's environment. (Transparency/Difference Principle)

(20) If there is a difference in the objects and properties two experiences represent as in one's environment, there is a difference in the content of the two experiences.

(21) Conclusion. If two experiences differ in phenomenal character, they differ in content.

(21) expresses (in slightly different language) what is sometimes called "weak representationalism": necessarily, experiences with the same content have the same phenomenal character.

My immediate reaction to Speaks' argument is that (19), as stated is puzzling. When is there a difference in objects and properties, as understood in (19)? Presumably just in case there is a difference in objects and/or properties. But where there is an introspectible difference and a difference in objects, there will be a difference in properties. So, all that really matters is the difference in properties.

Also (20) is problematic. Speaks argues convincingly that Fregean content won't do, given transparency. And the Fregean line conflicts anyway with the very plausible view that the content of experience is nonconceptual. However, Russellian singular content gets into trouble with hallucinations and the need there for gappy content, as I have argued at length elsewhere (Tye forthcoming). One solution is to opt for existential content, but this also seems to me

unsatisfactory. If I see a particular tomato (call it 'Tom'), the content of my experience isn't just that there is something before me that is red and round and bulgy; for Tom intuitively is crucial to the accuracy of my actual experience. After all, it is Tom that looks red, round and bulgy to me. Had Tom not been present, my actual experience would not have matched the world.

The obvious remaining alternative as far as content goes is the view that the content is a set of possible worlds. In the case of Tom, the relevant set is the set of worlds at which Tom is red, round and bulgy. What if Tom had not existed and I, the subject of the experience, had introduced 'Tom' as a name for what I erroneously took myself to be seeing? Now 'Tom' is an empty rigid designator. So, the set of possible worlds at which Tom is red, round and bulgy is the empty set. In both the veridical case and the hallucinatory cases, then, there is a content (though not the same one) and the accuracy conditions in the veridical case involve a real, external particular (as they should).

On this view, (20) is false. To see this, consider two phenomenally different hallucinatory experiences. They differ in the properties they represent (given transparency) but not in their content (for each, the content is the empty set). This not only undermines the above argument for content representationalism but also creates direct trouble for the thesis itself. According to the content representationalist, on both the strong and weak variants, experiences that are alike in their content are alike in their phenomenal character. But phenomenally different hallucinatory experiences have the same

content. The conclusion I draw is that if we are going to be representationalists, we should be property representationalists.

## 5. Property Representationalism

The basic thesis of property representationalism is that necessarily experiences that are alike in the properties they represent are alike in their phenomenal character. As noted earlier, to my mind, this is the most basic thesis of representationalism. There is a complication, however.

Prima facie, an experience as of a red square to the left of a green triangle represents the same properties as an experience as of a red triangle to the left of a green square, namely, being red, being square, being triangular, being green, and being to the left of. But the experiences are phenomenally different.

To this I reply that the experiences represent different property complexes and this is what makes them phenomenally different. One represents the property of being an  $x$  and the property of being a  $y$  such that  $x$  is a red square and  $y$  is a green triangle and  $x$  is to the left of  $y$ . Not so the other. So, either we can take property complexes to fall within the general metaphysical category of property in which case the above thesis of property representationalism needs no revision or we can restate the thesis slightly. Following Mark Johnston (2004), let us call the relevant complexes, “sensible profiles”. Now the thesis is that necessarily, experiences that represent the same sensible profiles are the same phenomenally.

The general picture here is one in which external properties play the counterpart role to qualia, on the qualia realist's view, and property complexes (sensible profiles) stand in for complexes of qualia. Just as for the qualia realist, qualia complexes are phenomenal characters, so for the property representationalist, property complexes are phenomenal characters (or at least 'fix' phenomenal characters). And just as, according to the qualia realist, qualia are the qualities of which we are aware when we introspect, so for the property representationalist, it is the properties comprising sensible profiles.

On this version of property representationalism, accuracy conditions for visual experiences appeal to sensible profiles and viewpoints. For example, if person, P, sees two objects, a and b, P's visual experience is accurate just in case the actual world belongs to the set of possible worlds at which there is an ordered triple  $\langle \underline{a}, \underline{b}, \underline{v} \rangle$  that has the relevant property complex and P occupies viewpoint v and a and b are objects of which P is aware.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Objections and Clarifications

Objection 1. Awareness and representational content: granting visual experiences have representational contents, can't their subjects be aware of those contents? Further, if I have a visual experience of a red square, can't I be aware by introspection of the property of representing a red square? And isn't this property an intrinsic property of the experience?

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<sup>8</sup> There is a delicate issue in metaphysics I skate over here. If items, a, b, .... jointly have property P, is the bearer of P really an ordered n-tuple of a, b .... ? If John and Jane jointly lift a piano, is it really an ordered pair of John and Jane that has the property of lifting a piano?



Reply. Awareness 'of' the content/representational properties of an experience is like awareness 'of' the content of a thought. It is fact-awareness. If I think that 7 is my lucky number and I introspect, I am aware that I am thinking that 7 is my lucky number. I am aware that what I am thinking is that 7 is my lucky number. Correspondingly, if I have an experience of a red square and I introspect, I am aware that I have an experience of (as of) a red square. Recall the earlier example of the muffins in the oven. I am not aware of the property of being cooked; I am not conscious of it. But when the timer dings, I am aware that the muffins are cooked. Fact awareness can occur without thing or property awareness.

Objection 2. The argument represents "an error in philosophical method". "Looking at a blue wall is an easy thing to do, but it is not easy (perhaps not possible) to answer on the basis of introspection alone the highly theoretical question of whether in so doing I am aware of intrinsic properties of my experience." (Block 1990, p. 689).

Reply. It seems pretty easy to me. Besides, what's so highly theoretical here? The notion of an intrinsic quality needs to be explained (on Harman's version of the transparency thesis). That's all. Not even this much theory is needed on my version.

Objection 3. "Harman relies on the diaphanousness of perception (Moore, 1922).... As a point about attention in one familiar circumstance—e.g., looking at a red tomato, this is certainly right. ... But attention and awareness are distinct, and as a point about awareness, the

diaphanousness claim is both straightforwardly wrong and misleading.”

(Block 2001, p. 7)

Block continues:

“One can be aware of what one is not attending to. For example, one might be involved in intense conversation while a jackhammer outside causes one to raise one’s voice without ever noticing or attending to the noise until someone comments on it—at which time one realizes that one was aware of it all along.” (Block 2001 p. 7)

So, Block thinks that one is aware of the experience when one views the tomato and introspects. It’s just that it’s in the background – like the jackhammer.

Reply. Agreed: attention and awareness are indeed distinct. Still, if one is aware of something, in standard visual cases, one can attend to the relevant thing directly on the basis of that awareness even if one does not do so. One can switch one’s attention/mental focus to the relevant thing directly on the basis of one’s overall awareness. But the transparency point is that one can’t do this in the experience case. Why? Because one isn’t aware of the experience at all. As noted earlier, this is all the argument from transparency based on attention needs.

Objection 4. “C]lose your eyes in daylight and you may find that it is easy to attend to aspects of your experience. If all experiences that have visual phenomenology were of the sort one gets with one’s eyes closed while awake in daylight, I doubt that the thesis that one cannot attend to or be aware of one’s experience would be so popular.” (Block 2001, p. 8).

Reply. What about cases of normal perception? Stoljar puts the point nicely:

“...even if Block is right about closing one’s eyes in daylight, orgasms and so on, Harman *still* seems to be right about experiences which uncontroversially have intentionality, such as experiences of color. But surely the qualia realist does not want to be maneuvered into the position of saying that color experiences lack qualia. It would be an odd sort of position indeed which postulates qualia but then adds that qualia are only instantiated in cases in which you face the sun with closed eyes, or else are in states of sexual climax!” (Stoljar, 2004)

Further, even in Block’s cited cases, one is not aware of aspects of one’s experiences (or so I have argued elsewhere (Tye 2000)). One is aware of qualities represented by those experiences (qualities that need not be instantiated). The same is true for other cases due to Boghossian and Velleman (1989), Peacocke (1982), and many others (see Tye 2000).

Objection 5. If projectivism about color is true, then colors are intrinsic properties of experiences that are mistakenly projected onto the world. In that case, we are aware of intrinsic properties of our experiences even though we are not aware of them as intrinsic properties of our experiences.

Reply. Projectivism is not true. My experience of blue is not itself blue. Colors, by their nature, are properties of spatially extended surfaces, films and volumes if they are properties of anything at all. And they are presented as such in perception.

Objection 6. Isn't the sense-datum theory a version of qualia realism? If it is, then qualia are properties of objects of experiences (namely sense-data). So, the transparency argument doesn't undermine one version of qualia realism.

Reply. Sense-data are usually taken to be mental objects (though not always). If sense-data are mental entities then the sense-datum view is incompatible with the further claim that in normal perception the properties of which we are aware when we introspect are presented to us as mind-independent, unless, of course, there is radical error in normal perception (Martin, 2002). Shape, for example, is presented as belonging to an external surface; likewise color.<sup>9</sup>

Alternatively, if sense-data are taken to be non-mental objects then if their qualities are held to be qualia, some qualia are non-mental. This is incompatible with qualia realism, as normally understood. And sense-data, conceived of as non-mental entities, face other problems. For example, where are they located? In the same space as physical objects? How is this possible? Further, how can their qualities make a causal difference?<sup>10</sup>

Objection 7. "Experience has no presence to us distinct from the presence of its objects...You can see a bush at the end of your street and think nothing of it. But you can also look at the bush, and, in so doing, think about your current situation as a perceiver. In the second case .... you are

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<sup>9</sup> I'm inclined to think that both shapes and colors are experienced as intrinsic properties of surfaces and so not dependent on things outside those surfaces including minds.

<sup>10</sup> This is a problem for both versions of the sense-datum view.

aware of your experience. But in this case, you will not be aware of your experience as a phenomenologically distinct item. Your experience won't suddenly pop onto the stage, in a way that might make you say, "Oh, there it is!".... You won't be able to selectively focus on your experience, as opposed to the object of the experience, the bush. Experience simply doesn't have that sort of profile." (Kennedy, forthcoming)

Reply. You can certainly think about your current situation as a perceiver as you see the bush. Still, in the given case, (I would say) your experience itself is like the perfectly camouflaged moth or the man's pipe in the picture. You aren't aware of it (de re), period. Rather you are merely aware that you are having an experience of a bush. That's why experience has no presence to us over and above its objects.

Objection 8. This objection pertains to transparency and non-veridical perception.

"[You cannot attend to what is not there] Tye often speaks in ways that suggest that [in non-veridical cases] certain [un-instantiated] qualities themselves are to be construed as objects of attention . . . But if this is what allegiance to the transparency claim demands we say, at this point the claim hardly seems introspectively evident. Followers of Meinong or Brentano might construct yet other accounts, having me attend to nonexistent or mentally inexistent circular objects ...." (Siewert 2004, p. 21)

Reply. This is a large topic. Agreed: you cannot attend to what is not

there. But on my view there is an un-instantiated quality there in the bad cases. That's how Mary can come to know what it is like to experience red even if she is hallucinating when she leaves her black and white room – in that scenario, she still gets a good 'look' at redness (Hawthorne and Kovakovitch 2006). Is not this introspectively evident to Mary (contra Siewert)? Meinong is committed to there being some thing that does not exist in the hallucinatory case. No such consequence follows, if we suppose that an un-instantiated quality is present in hallucination.

Further, it is very easy to explain how one could represent a color that is not instantiated in hallucination. Consider the case of a speedometer reading 60 mph when the car is going some other speed or even when the car chassis has been disconnected from the wheels and the speedometer is being artificially tested. On the Normal tracking account of instrument representation, X represents that P just in case, under Normal (Design) conditions, X is tokened if and only if P and because P. Under Normal conditions, the speedometer would read what it does just in case it is going 60 mph and because it is. But Normal conditions do not obtain; there is misrepresentation. The property of traveling 60 mph is un-instantiated. If we think of the senses as instruments provided to us by Mother Nature, we can give a corresponding account of property representation during hallucinations. Even granting that the Normal tracking account of sensory representation is too simple, as stated, the general point still stands.

Those who aren't keen on un-instantiated qualities often think of qualities as tropes. There is no trope in the hallucinatory case but there is in the good cases. But just what is a trope? I follow Fine (1999) in thinking of tropes as qua-entities (rigid embodiments) – universals under the description of being possessed by such-and-such an object. So, if there are tropes, then there are universals. And if there are universals, why not un-instantiated ones?

Here is a further argument for my view in the case of hallucinations. Suppose that Frank Jackson's Mary has a cousin, Mary\*, who, like Mary, is locked in a black and white room. Unlike Mary, Mary\* has incomplete knowledge. She doesn't know all the color facts in her room. She comes out and hallucinates something red next to something orange and something green. On the basis of her experience she gains the knowledge that red is more like orange than green (Johnston 2004). Doesn't that require that she be aware of red, of orange and of green?<sup>11</sup>

You might reply that in hallucinating she is aware of the fact that red is more like orange than green and that this fact-awareness grounds her knowledge (Pautz 2007). But how does she get that fact awareness? Fact awareness is either secondary or primary. If fact awareness is primary, she must be aware of each of the three colors and their resemblance relations. If it is secondary, then

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<sup>11</sup> You might object that Mary\* would (might) not yet have the concepts red, orange and green and so would not (might not) know the fact in question. The use of these color concepts is not crucial to the example. Mary\* would certainly know that this color is more similar to that color than to that other color.

what is the fact of which she has primary awareness (or the items of which she has primary awareness)?

Not the fact that there is (before her) a red thing that is more similar in color to the orange thing than to the green one. Nor the fact that everything red is more similar in color to everything orange than it is to anything green. It is implausible to suppose that she has primary awareness of that general fact as she hallucinates. The only remaining alternative, it seems to me, is to hold that Mary\*'s fact awareness is based on her de awareness of the (un-instantiated) qualities, red, orange, and green.

Objection 9. What is true is only that our experiences are weakly transparent:

*“Weak Transparency:* it is *difficult* (but not impossible) to attend directly to our experience, i.e., we can most easily attend to our experience by attending to the objects represented by that experience.” (Kind, 2003, p. 230)

Weak transparency is compatible with qualia realism.<sup>12</sup>

“When we consider paradigmatic examples of transparent objects from everyday life, such as panes of glass, there is no question that the sense of transparency in question must be weak transparency (and thus, that weak transparency must be sufficient to capture the notion of transparency). The window next to my desk overlooks the roof of my

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<sup>12</sup> This view is also held by Van Gulick (1993) and Loar (2002). According to Loar, if we adopt an attitude of “oblique reflection” to our experiences, we can be aware of and attend to visual qualia. This, he grants, is not the normal attitude.



neighbor's house. As I look out the window, it is difficult for me to avoid seeing right through it to my neighbor's roof, but it is by no means impossible for me to do so. If I angle my head just so, or if the light is right, I can undeniably focus on the pane of glass of the window itself.” (Kind, 2003, p. 233)

Reply. It is hard to see why the fact that objects we usually classify as transparent are weakly transparent shows that “weak transparency must be sufficient to capture the notion of transparency.” In reality, glass is not transparent; it is nearly transparent. Here is a standard scientific description:

“A transparent physical material shows objects behind it as unobscured and doesn't reflect light off its surface. Clear glass is a nearly transparent material. Although glass allows most light to pass through unobscured, in reality it also reflects some light. A perfectly transparent material is completely invisible.”

(<http://www.opengl.org/archives/resources/faq/technical/transparency.htm>)

My claim is that experiences and their qualities are perfectly transparent. Kind gives no good reason to contest this. She thinks that experiences are like panes of glass and so are nearly transparent. I think that experiences are like perfectly transparent materials.

Interestingly, Kind's claim that we usually, but not always, attend to our experiences by attending to their objects and the qualities of those objects is denied by other opponents of transparency. Nida-Rumelin (2007), for example, says:

...a person who focuses attention on the intrinsic phenomenal character of her own color experience does so by carefully attending to the color the perceived object appears to have in her experience.” (2007, p. 434)

There is no ‘usually’ or ‘typically’ hedge here. Nida-Rumelin takes it that we can focus attention on our color experiences and their phenomenal character and that when we do so we do it (in every case) by attending to the color experienced. Nida-Rumelin continues:

“How could somebody think otherwise?... In carefully attending to the color the sky appears to have in one's experience (while wondering for instance if it is slightly reddish or slightly greenish or pure blue) we attend to a specific aspect of the phenomenal character of our own color experience. We attend to the phenomenal character of our experience and we also attend to the color on the surface of the object. There is no conflict between these two acts of attention, rather one might say: there are no *two* acts of attention involved. To attend to the intrinsic character of one's color experience *is* to attend in a particular way to the color the perceived object appears to have.” (2007, p. 434)

Nida-Rumelin takes these remarks to undercut transparency, as understood by myself and Harman. However, there seems to me much that is right in the above passage. And, contrary to Nida-Rumelin's intentions, her remarks (with only small changes) can be used to provide an argument against qualia realism and indeed for a strong version of property representationalism.

## 7. An Argument for Strong Property Representationalism

Agreed:

(22) In carefully attending to the color the sky appears to have in one's experience (while wondering for instance if it is slightly reddish or slightly greenish or pure blue), we attend to a specific aspect of the phenomenal character of our own color experience.

(23) There is only a single act of attention here. We don't (and can't) turn our attention away from the experienced color to the relevant aspect of the phenomenal character.

Now,

(24) If indeed there is only a single act of attention, then, if there are qualia, that act has two different properties as its objects: the color outside, as it were, and the color quale of the experience.

But we cannot attend to one quality by attending to a quality with a different (non-overlapping) bearer (even though sometimes we can attend to one thing by attending to a part of that thing). So, if a single act of attention takes in two qualities of things without common parts, that act must be such that it can be narrowed to just one of those qualities, whether or not the resultant act is to be counted as the same act or not. So,

(25) If a single act of attention can be distributed among two or more properties with different non-overlapping bearers, then, for each property, the subject can narrow her attentional focus to that property and ignore the other.

(26) But in the introspective case, one can't narrow one's attention in the above way -- one can't attend to the phenomenal character of one's color experience without attending to the color experienced.

So,

(27) There is no color quale.

So,

(28) In reality there is just one thing attended to here, the color experienced.

So,

(29) The color experienced is the phenomenal character of one's experience.

But

(30) The color experienced just is the color represented in one's experience.

So,

(31) The color represented in one's experience is the phenomenal character of one's color experience (strong property representationalism).<sup>13</sup>

Strong property representationalism, I should add, leaves open what further conditions the color represented in one's experience needs to meet to be a phenomenal character. But if color is out there in the world, or at least is

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<sup>13</sup> I take it that weak property representationalism is a supervenience thesis; strong property representationalism is an identity claim.

presented as such, then so is phenomenal character.<sup>14</sup> The phenomenal character of an experience, then, is not an intrinsic quality of the experience. Once again, qualia realism is seen to be false.

### **8. Does Strong Property Representationalism Erect a Veil of Perception?**

Here is the worry. According to the strong property representationalist, mind-independent particulars play no role in phenomenal character. But if they play no role in phenomenal character, then, it seems, they play no constitutive role in conscious experience. There's the phenomenal character -- the conscious experience -- and then lying behind it in normal cases the ordinary, manifest objects. That's implausible. If we are to respect the commonsense position of naïve realism then ordinary objects must enter into normal visual experiences. They must be constituents of those experiences. If ordinary objects merely lie behind conscious experiences, then a veil of perception has been erected.

The key point to appreciate in replying to this worry is that conscious experience can outstrip phenomenal character. In the good cases, we are aware of ordinary objects and the properties they instantiate. But we are not aware of either by being aware of the other. The experiences we undergo in such cases are partly constituted by the objects we see (Kennedy forthcoming). By contrast, when we are hallucinating, there is no object to enter into the conscious

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Johnston writes, "There are no qualia. It is ordinary qualities and complexes involving them that account for the so-called subjective character of experience" (2004, p. 146). Even though Johnston is not a representationalist, this claim is one I accept.

experience. Thus, seeing a tomato (that looks red, round and bulgy) and hallucinating a ripe tomato are two different experiences with a common phenomenal character. The complex of properties represented exhausts the phenomenal character. But the complex does not exhaust the experience.<sup>15</sup> So, there is no veil of perception.

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<sup>15</sup> Cp. Kennedy forthcoming.

## APPENDIX

It may be useful to summarize very briefly how my representationalist views have evolved through time. When I wrote *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (1995) and *Consciousness, Color and Content* (2000), I held these three theses:

(1) *Common Phenomenal Character*: Veridical, illusory and hallucinatory experiences can sometimes have the very same phenomenal character.

(2) *Common Existential Content*: Veridical, illusory and hallucinatory experiences all have existential representational content and in some cases have the very same existential content.

(3) *Strong Content Representationalism*: the phenomenal character of a mental state is one and the same as its poised, nonconceptual, existential content (its PANIC, to use my earlier acronym).

I gave up (2) around 2006 and I held for a while in place of (2):

(2a) *Disjunctivism about Content*: Veridical and illusory experiences have singular contents; hallucinatory experiences have gappy contents.

Since I continued to hold (1), I then also gave up (3) about which I had already started to have independent doubts, since it no longer seemed to me to fit well with the transparency of experience. In place of (3), I adopted (2009):

(3a) *Strong Property Representationalism*: the phenomenal character of an experience is one and the same as the complex of properties represented by the experience. A mental state has phenomenal character just in case it is appropriately poised (a functional role condition) and it nonconceptually represents a complex of properties.

I was also then a weak content representationalist:

(4) *Weak Content Representationalism*: necessarily, experiences with the same representational content have the same phenomenal character.

Later around 2010 (see my forthcoming) I came to have doubts about gappy content and so I gave up (2a) and in its place I accepted:

(2b) *Common Set-Theoretic Content*. Veridical, illusory and hallucinatory experiences have as their content a set of possible worlds. Where there is a seen object  $A$  experienced as being  $F$ , the relevant set is the set of possible worlds at which  $A$  is  $F$ . Where there is no seen object (the hallucinatory case), so that ' $A$ ' is empty, the set of worlds is the set of worlds at which  $A$  is  $F$ , where this set is now the empty set.

(2b) also fits well with my view about the content of thought elaborated in my 2012 book with Mark Sainsbury, *Seven Puzzles of Thought*. Once (2b) is accepted, weak content representationalism goes (for reasons given above in the essay). So, now, of the theses above, I hold (1), (2b) and (3a).



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FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2





