

## Outline of an Account of Experience<sup>1</sup>

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The account of experience sketched below is one to which I was led by a reflection on empirical thinking and, more specifically, on empirical reasoning and empirical dialectic. Sometimes when we reason—for example, when we are proving an arithmetical claim—our reasoning is independent of the experiences we undergo as we reason. The contents of our claims as well as the legitimacy of our inferential moves—including the introduction of new terms through definitions—do not depend on our concurrent experiences. They do not depend on things we happen to be seeing or hearing or touching or tasting or smelling as we reason. At other times, this is not so: our reasonings at these times *do* depend on the experiences we undergo as we reason. For example, the content and legitimacy of a claim we make during a stretch of reasoning can depend on our tactile experiences as we make that claim (e.g., the claim “this ball is hot” made of a ball one is holding). For another example, the legitimacy of a term we introduce through an ostensive definition (e.g., “call that color ‘yellow’”) can depend on our visual experience when we issue the definition. It is thus plain that our reasonings do sometimes depend on our experiences. It is not plain, however, what the character of this dependence is. Indeed, the character of the dependence has often been grossly misconceived, with detrimental consequences for our conception of empirical rationality and, especially, *theoretical* empirical reason. The account of experience sketched below appealed to me because it helps make sense of empirical reasoning and it illuminates thereby empirical rationality and the workings of theoretical empirical reason.

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is drawn from a book, tentatively titled *Conscious Experience: A Logical Inquiry*, that I have been working on for several years. Many ideas sketched below receive an extended treatment in the book. Because of space limitations, I have had to forego in this essay discussion of some important topics (e.g., foundationalism). These, too, receive an extended treatment in the book.

I begin by setting out three ideas that are fundamental to the account of experience I wish to recommend: the hypothetical given (part I), the presentational complex (part II), and appearances (parts III-V). Then, after a summary statement of the account (part VI), I illustrate its usefulness through two applications, first to ostensive definitions (part VII) and then to the debate over the nature of color (part VIII).

## I. The Hypothetical Given

1. Consider a simple perceptual situation. Imagine you are looking out of your kitchen window, a red bird flies by, and you affirm out loud, “that’s a cardinal.” Your affirmation is an ordinary perceptual judgment, and such judgments are often rational. Let us take it that in this particular case your judgment is indeed rational, and let us ask: what is the contribution of your visual experience to the rationality of your judgment? Bertrand Russell’s answer to the question would have been that your experience provides you with knowledge of some sense-data, and your perceptual judgment is somehow based on this knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Russell’s answer is, however, no longer popular. Contemporary philosophers are inclined to give a much simpler answer: your experience provides you with knowledge of ordinary things such as birds, or on a variant proposal, it provides you with some kind of entitlement to, or justification for, some ordinary perceptual beliefs and judgments, including perhaps your judgment “that’s a cardinal.”<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup>At least, this would have been Russell’s answer in 1912, when he published *Problems of Philosophy*. He writes there (p. 16):

What the senses *immediately* tell us is not the truth about the object as it is apart from us, but only the truth about certain sense-data which, so far as we can see, depend upon the relations between us and the object. Thus what we directly see and feel is merely ‘appearance’, which we believe to be a sign of some ‘reality’ behind.

<sup>3</sup>The simple answer comes in two flavors. One follows the broad outlines of Russell’s relational account of experience and takes experience to acquaint us with ordinary things. This kind of answer has been developed by Bill Brewer, John Campbell, M. G. F. Martin, and others. (See Brewer, *Perception and Its Objects*; Campbell, *Reference and Consciousness*; and Martin, “On Being Alienated.”) The other flavor takes experience to be a state with content, one that confers a particular epistemic status on (a selection of) perceptual judgments and beliefs. This

*Empiricism and Experience* (henceforth: *E&E*), I argued for a different way of conceiving the rational contribution of experience—I called it *the hypothetical given*—to which I now turn.

2. The role of experience, according to this conception, is not to provide the subject with knowledge of anything or to bestow a rational or justificatory status on any of the subject's beliefs or judgments. It is instead to render rational certain transitions, including transitions from views to judgments. When you saw the bird fly by, you possessed various concepts; you took the world to contain certain kinds of things; and you had some knowledge of some of these things (or, at least, you held some beliefs about some of these things). When you issued the judgment, you accepted, in short, a particular *view* of the world.<sup>4</sup> Two factors were in play in your issuance of your judgment: experience and view. You accepted a view; you underwent a visual experience; and you issued a particular perceptual judgment. Your visual experience, it is plain, is not what entitled you to your antecedent view. Indeed, your visual experience reveals nothing about the correctness or the rationality of this view. Similarly, the visual experience did not, *by itself*, provide you with any entitlement to the perceptual judgment; it reveals nothing about the truth or the rationality of the judgment. The rational role of the visual experience is to be located, I suggest, in a quite different place. The role of experience is to render rational *transitions* from antecedent views to (e.g.) judgments. Because of your visual experience, a *rational linkage* obtained between your view and your judgment, which made your *move* to the judgment rational. The experience did not render your judgment rational; it rendered your *transition*, your *move*, to the judgment rational.

Let  $\Gamma_e$ , *the given in e*, be the total rational contribution of experience *e* to the subject's

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kind of answer has been developed by, among others, John McDowell, James Pryor, and Susanna Siegel. (See McDowell, *Mind and World*; Pryor, "The Skeptic and the Dogmatist"; Siegel, *Contents of Visual Experience* and "The Epistemic Impact of the Etiology of Experience.") In "Perceptual Content Defended" and "Experience and Evidence," Susanna Schellenberg offers a theory that combines aspects of both approaches. See also Alex Byrne, "Experience and Content" and Ori Beck, *On Learning from Experience*; the former defends an unorthodox version of a content theory, and the latter an unorthodox version of a relational theory.

<sup>4</sup>A view includes beliefs, conjectures, and other propositional attitudes. It also includes linkages to experience, which cannot be captured through propositional attitudes.

cognition. Set  $e$  to be your visual experience;  $v$ , your antecedent view; and  $J$ , your perceptual judgment. Let us represent the transition from acceptance of  $v$  to judgment  $J$  thus:

$$(1) \quad (\text{Accept: } v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept: } J).^5$$

Your visual experience renders this transition rational, and we can represent the contribution of  $e$  to your judgment thus:

$$(2) \quad \Gamma_e: (\text{Accept: } v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept: } J).$$

3. The same experience can render rational transitions to different perceptual judgments—even to contrary perceptual judgments—if the antecedent view is relevantly different. Had you accepted a different view when you looked out of the window, your visual experience  $e$  would have enabled you to move rationally to different perceptual judgments. Suppose, for example, you accepted a view,  $v^*$ , according to which you live in a region where the only red birds are parrots. Suppose, further, that in experience  $e$ , the glimpse of the bird being fleeting, you naturally issued the perceptual judgment “that’s a red parrot” ( $J^*$ ).<sup>6</sup> Now the transition to the judgment  $J^*$  would be rational. That is,

$$\Gamma_e: (\text{Accept: } v^*) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept: } J^*).$$

For another example, suppose you accepted a sense-datum view ( $v'$ ) and believed that you immediately perceive only sense-data. Then, the transition to the judgment “that’s a red sense-datum” ( $J'$ ) would be rational. That is,

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<sup>5</sup>Note that (1) is not a statement but a singular term that refers to a transition. So, the symbol “ $\longrightarrow$ ” is not a sentential connective and should not be read as “if . . . then . . . .”

<sup>6</sup>We can assume, if necessary, that in  $v^*$  (in contrast to  $v$ ) your grasp of the concepts “cardinal” and “parrot” is not so firm as to enable you to visually distinguish between cardinals and parrots in fleeting encounters.

$\Gamma_e: (\text{Accept: } v') \longrightarrow (\text{Accept: } J).$

In short, the same experience, when joined with different possible antecedent views, can render rational transitions to different possible judgments.<sup>7</sup>

4. It will clarify the proposal I am making if we reflect on the role of a valid argument in reasoning. Consider an instance of *modus ponens*:

(3) that's a bird (*B*), and if that's a bird then that's a cardinal (if *B* then *C*); therefore, that's a cardinal (*C*).

Because this argument is valid, certain transitions in reasoning are rational—for example, the transition from the acceptance of the premisses (namely, *B* and “if *B* then *C*”) to the recognition of the commitment to the conclusion (*C*). Notice that the rationality of the transition implies nothing about the rationality of the initial acceptance of the premisses or of the subsequent recognition of the commitment. (And, of course, it implies nothing about the truth of the premisses or of the conclusion.) What is rational is the *transition*, and the transition can be rational even though, for example, the initial acceptance of the premisses is thoroughly irrational.

The situation is parallel with the rational linkages instituted by an experience. Consider again the last example, in which we supposed that you accept a sense-datum view *v'* and your experience *e* renders rational the transition to the judgment *J'*, “that's a red sense-datum.” This transition can be rational even though the acceptance of the initial sense-datum view is thoroughly irrational and even though the subsequent judgment is also thoroughly irrational. The sense-datum view may be incorrect and even absurd; still, that does not impugn the rationality of

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<sup>7</sup>A note on notation: Display (2) does not imply that the transition from acceptance of *v* to acceptance of *J* actually occurs. It implies only that the transition would be rational if it occurred.

Note also that an experience renders a variety of transitions rational, not just transitions to judgments. These transitions include transitions to ostensive definitions, to acceptance, and to recognitions of commitment.

the transition. (One may have played chess badly and through various illegitimate moves have arrived at an impossible arrangement of pieces on the board. Nonetheless, the move one makes next—say, moving the queen in a certain way—may well be perfectly legitimate. The legitimacy of the *move* implies nothing about the legitimacy of the starting configuration or of the resulting one.)

The given in experience, I am suggesting, is analogous to a valid argument scheme. Both render rational *transitions* (not, e.g., judgments). Both are indifferent to the status of the starting points of transitions. And both possess a certain generality: *Modus ponens*, for example, institutes rational transitions for a whole range of premisses, with entirely different contents (including false and even incoherent contents). Similarly, the given in experience,  $\Gamma_e$ , institutes rational transitions between all kinds of views and judgments (including incorrect and even absurd views).

In light of the analogy between the given and valid argument schemata, we may read (2),

(2)  $\Gamma_e: (\text{Accept: } v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept: } J),$

as “*e perceptually entails J relative to v.*” If the context allows it, we may suppress relativity to view *v* and read (2) as “*e perceptually entails J*” and, even more simply, as “*e entails J.*”

5. There is one difference between valid argument schemata and the given in experience that deserves emphasis. A valid argument scheme institutes rational linkages that do not add any new content to a view. Suppose, for example, that you come to accept the conclusion *C* through an application of *modus ponens*, such as that in (3). You do not thereby enrich your view with any new content. The conclusion *C* is already implicit in your initial view; it is logically implied by the premisses you initially accept. In contrast, when you accepted “that’s a cardinal” on the basis of your experience, you genuinely enriched your view; you added new synthetic content to your view. The perceptual judgment “that’s a cardinal” is view-dependent, certainly; nevertheless, it cannot be derived from your antecedent view through any *a priori* reasoning. This is a vitally important difference between valid argument schemata and the given in experience. The synthetic additions brought about by experiences can enrich a view. The additions can disturb

the view, and they can even utterly transform the view. Not so for the analytic expansions brought about by valid argument schemata.

6. The hypothetical given entails that there is an interdependence among views and perceptual judgments. The rationality of perceptual judgments depends on view, and the rationality of view depends, in turn, on the rationality of perceptual judgments. In *E&E*, I mount an argument that this logical interdependence is perfectly fine and, furthermore, that it helps us understand puzzling aspects of empirical cognition. In particular, it allows us to reject foundationalist conceptions of empirical rationality while recognizing the crucial role played by experience. We have here a striking illustration of a general idea for which Nuel Belnap and I have argued on entirely separate grounds: that certain kinds of logical interdependence are, from the logical point of view, perfectly legitimate and, furthermore, that they do useful work.<sup>8</sup>

7. The hypothetical given seems to make the rational contribution of experience too weak—in one respect, even weaker than that posited by Cartesian conceptions of experience. For, under this conception of the given, experience is deprived of the power to bestow rationality on *any* judgments, including such weak ones as “it looks to me as if there is a red thing before me.” I argued in *E&E* that appearances are deceptive here. The hypothetical given bestows on experience a role strong enough to sustain an attractive empiricism.

## II. Presentation to Consciousness

8. So much for the proposal I wish to make about the rational role of experience. Let us now turn to the question, “how to conceive of experience itself?” Russell and others speak of experience as a *presentation* of things, and I wish to follow them here: in experience, some worldly items are presented to the subject’s consciousness. Russell identified presentation with

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<sup>8</sup>We argue this in *Revision Theory of Truth*.

acquaintance: to be presented with an item is to know that item.<sup>9</sup> This led him to deny that ordinary things are ever presented in experience. Russell concluded that only a special, narrow range of items is ever presented in experience—namely, appearances, which he called ‘sense-data’ and which he conceived of as particulars.<sup>10</sup> When you are seeing a yellow bird, what is presented to your consciousness, according to Russell, is not a particular specimen of the kind “bird,” but a particular sense-datum, a fleeting patch of yellow that occupies a portion of your private visual space. Contemporary Naive Realists follow Russell in thinking of presentation as acquaintance, but they reject Russellian sense-data. They think experience acquaints one with ordinary things.<sup>11</sup>

9. I believe that both Russell and the Naive Realists are, each, partly right (and also partly wrong). The Naive Realists are right in their contention that ordinary things can be presented in experience. When you see a yellow bird, it is natural to say, with the Naive Realists, that the bird and its being yellow are presented to your consciousness. But Russell is also right, it seems to me, that we cannot regard experience as providing us with knowledge of ordinary things. When you see a yellow bird, you often do know, of course, that the bird before you is yellow. But this knowledge does not issue solely from your experience. It is a product of various factors, including your view and your experience. It is because you possess the concepts “bird” and “yellow” and because you are able to bring these concepts into play in the right way that you come to possess the knowledge that the bird is yellow. Your view plays an essential role in your acquisition of perceptual knowledge of the bird.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Russell, “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” p. 202-3: “to say that S has acquaintance with O is essentially the same thing as to say that O is presented to S.” According to John Yolton, the linking of presence with knowledge is a recurring theme in modern philosophy: “to have objects present to the mind is simply to be aware of them, to apprehend them, to know them” (*Perceptual Acquaintance*, p. 6).

<sup>10</sup>This was Russell’s view until 1919, when he moved to Neutral Monism.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Campbell’s contribution in his and Quassim Cassam’s *Berkeley’s Puzzle*.

<sup>12</sup>We can allow that certain animals (including us) possess non-conceptual knowledge. This sort of knowledge is not relevant, however, for the assessment of empirical reasoning and

**10.** Consider the situation from the viewpoint of rational debate. You are looking at a yellow bird; you know that the bird is yellow; you issue the judgment that the bird is yellow. Now suppose that an authority on birds and color were to tell you that there is no yellow bird before you. You respect this authority, though, let us imagine, you do not regard it as infallible. What should your rational response be in this situation? Should you ignore what the authority tells you and retain your belief that there is a yellow bird? Plainly, not. You should, at the very least, suspend judgment. If, however, the right view for you to take were that your visual experience, by itself, is providing you with the knowledge of the yellowness of the bird then, since the visual experience has not changed, it would indeed be rational for you to ignore the authority. For it would be rational for you to take the knowledge-giving visual experience as trumping the fallible authority.<sup>13</sup> Notice that this argument from authority, as we might call it, does not work with “appearance” judgments (e.g., “it looks to me as if there is there is a patch of yellow before me”). If in an ordinary situation, a supposed authority were to contradict one of your appearance judgments, you could rightfully dismiss that authority. So, it is much more plausible to regard experience as providing one with knowledge of appearances than as providing one with

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for the logic of empirical dialectic.

<sup>13</sup>Suppose you begin with the view that the visual experience, by itself, is providing you with knowledge that there is a yellow bird. The authority’s report leads you to enrich your view with the belief “this fallible authority is telling me that there is no yellow bird.” The enrichment neither requires nor motivates the abandonment of the initial belief that your visual experience is providing you with knowledge that there is a yellow bird. Hence, it would be perfectly rational for you to conclude that there is indeed a yellow bird and that the authority is mistaken.

Suppose, on the other hand, that you begin with the view that the given in experience is hypothetical and that your visual experience does not, by itself, provide you with knowledge that there is a yellow bird. As before, the authority’s report leads you to enrich your view with the belief “this fallible authority is telling me that there is no yellow bird.” Again as before, the enrichment neither requires nor motivates a change of belief about the role of experience. However, the enrichment blocks the perceptual entailment to the judgment “there is a yellow bird,” making it rational for you to abandon the claim to know that there is a yellow bird. The path is now open to an acceptance of the authority’s report.

Rational dynamics are best understood in terms of shifting views, not in terms of shifting assessments of the cognitive powers of experience.

knowledge of ordinary things.<sup>14</sup>

**11.** The hypothetical given enables us to hold fast to the thought that experience plays a vitally important role in cognition while rejecting the idea that experience acquaints one with anything. It thus enables a synthesis of the insights of the Naive Realists with those of Russell. It allows us to follow the Naive Realists in recognizing the possibility that ordinary things are sometimes presented in experience, while recognizing with Russell that experience does not acquaint us with ordinary things. We achieve the synthesis by denying a shared assumption: that presentation is acquaintance. In experience, a subject is presented with some worldly items, but experience provides knowledge of nothing; it acquaints one with nothing.

**12.** The hypothetical given enables a liberal conception of presence. We can allow, for example, that universals can be presented to consciousness in experience. Presence of a universal does not imply that the subject is acquainted with the universal or that she can readily acquire a concept for it. Acquaintance with a universal, as philosophers from Plato down have pointed out, is a high cognitive achievement; mere individual experience is incapable of delivering it. This is the reason why, in *Problems of Philosophy*, Russell excluded universals from the domain of experience: since presence was for Russell acquaintance, and since there cannot be acquaintance with universals in a mere experience, Russell was led to the view that in experience only particulars are presented. The main difficulty with this line of thought is that acquaintance with particulars is no less a cognitive achievement than acquaintance with universals. Hence, the proper conclusion to draw is that experience acquaints us with nothing, that presence is not acquaintance. And now a liberal view of presence is open to us.

**13.** We can allow that items belonging to any category—objects, properties, relations, as well as facts, processes, actions, and their characteristics—may be presented to a subject's consciousness in an experience. Imagine that you go for a walk in a forest, and you see a yellow

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<sup>14</sup>In *Problems of Philosophy*, Russell argues in a different way to the conclusion that experience does not acquaint one with ordinary things. Russell's argument rests on the relativity of perception and seems to me flawed.

bird in a tree before you. The bird, its color, its relationship to the branch on which it is sitting, its grooming of its wings—these items, which belong to diverse categories, may all be presented to you in your visual experience. As you experience these items, you of course know of their presence. However, knowledge, and even conception, is not a requirement on presence. Items of which the subject is completely ignorant may be presented to a subject’s consciousness; she may even lack concepts for these items. As she looks at a flower growing on a bush, a stick insect may be presented in our subject’s visual experience, but our subject may be oblivious of it. She may even lack the concept “stick insect.”<sup>15</sup>

**14.** Even within a category, items of diverse sorts may be presented in experience. Things presented may be physical or mental; they may be external to the subject’s body or internal to it. Even brain processes, we can allow, can be presented in an experience.<sup>16</sup> We need put few *a priori* restrictions on presentation. What is presented to consciousness depends on our constitution and our situation in the world. We can let empirical inquiry guide us to the items that can, given our constitution and situation, be presented to us in experience.

**15.** It will be useful to introduce some terminology. If an item *i* is presented to the subject’s consciousness in an experience *e*, then *i* will be said to be an **element of *e*** and *e* will be said to be **directed to *i***. The following expressions are thus equivalent: “*e* presents *i*,” “in *e*, *i* is presented to consciousness,” “*i* is an element of *e*,” and “*e* is directed to *i*.” The totality of elements presented to consciousness in an experience *e* is **the presentational complex of *e*** (notation:  $\Pi_e$ ).

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<sup>15</sup>Terminological note: I use ‘item’ and ‘thing’ as the broadest cross-categorical terms. Objects, universals, facts, actions, and so on—all count as **items** and as **things**. Thus, the Washington Monument is an object; it is not a universal or a fact or an action; and it counts as an item and as a thing. Square, to take another example, is a universal; it is not an object or a fact or an action; and it, too, counts as an item and as a thing.

<sup>16</sup>Russell and Sellars suggested, in their later philosophy, that brain events and processes are presented in experience. See Russell’s *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, and Sellars’s “Foundations of a Metaphysics of Pure Process.”

16. We can think of the presentational complex as the portion of the world to which an experience is directed. This portion may be articulated into objects, universals, and facts to a greater or lesser degree, and it may be determinate to a greater or lesser degree. Suppose you look at a page of a newspaper in good light. Your visual consciousness would be presented with a highly articulated and fairly determinate whole—a whole consisting of some of the page together with the letters and the pictures on it. But suppose you look at the same page through translucent glass. Some of the articulation and the determinacy would now be lost. Several of the letters that were clearly present in the earlier experience may now be blurred together. Also, there would be a greater indeterminacy about the parts of the newspaper that were presented to your consciousness. A whole may, in short, be presented to consciousness when several of its parts are not presented. Furthermore, it can happen that the identity of the presented whole is not entirely determinate.

### III. The Transparency of Experience

17. The presentational complex captures the objective dimension of experience. How should we conceive of the subjective dimension, the dimension philosophers talk about under such headings as ‘phenomenology’ and ‘phenomenal character’? Russell conceived of the subjective dimension in terms of appearances, which “depend upon the relations between us and the object” and which he identified with sense-data.<sup>17</sup> Nowadays, a different idea has gained substantial following: that the subjective dimension of experience is nothing over and above the objective dimension, that experience is a transparent taking in of the external world. Here are some expressions of this idea:

Experience is “transparent” in the sense that in introspection, it is as if experience saw right through itself and got in direct touch with material objects and their qualities.

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<sup>17</sup>See the extract from *Problems of Philosophy* in footnote 2 above.

That experience is diaphanous (or transparent) is a thesis about the phenomenology of perceptual experience. It is the thesis that the properties that make an experience the kind of experience it is are the properties of the object of experience.

The phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room, is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself.<sup>18</sup>

A number of different ideas are suggested by these passages. Let us focus on one that answers our initial question, “how to conceive of the subjective dimension of experience?” Let us settle on ‘phenomenology’ as the preferred name for the subjective dimension of experience. Then, we can formulate the idea thus:

**Constitution:** The phenomenology of an experience is constituted by the qualities and relations presented in the experience.

Suppose you are looking at a yellow bird under normal conditions. Then, according to Constitution, the color quality yellow constitutes the phenomenology of your visual experience. If Constitution is true, then our account of experience can be quite simple. Let us examine, therefore, whether there are compelling reasons to accept it.

**18.** Advocates of Constitution cite two authorities to support their case: G. E. Moore, especially his essay “Refutation of Idealism,” and introspection. In “Refutation of Idealism,” Moore introduces the idea of transparency thus:

And, in general, 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

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<sup>18</sup>The first quote is from Kathrin Glüer’s “Colors without Circles,” p. 114. I should note that in this quote Glüer is explaining how transparency is usually understood, not setting out her own view. The second quote is from Frank Jackson’s “The Knowledge Argument, Diaphanousness, Representationalism,” p. 55; and the third from Campbell’s *Reference and Consciousness*, p. 116.

but the blue; we may be convinced that there *is something* but *what* it is no philosopher, I think, has yet clearly recognised. (P. 20)

A little later in the essay, Moore expresses the idea in a somewhat different way:

The moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see *what*, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. 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. (P. 25)

Moore invokes introspection in this passage, but the invocation does not help us reach any substantive transparency thesis. Michael Tye provides in the following extract an argument that appeals to introspection and that promises to take us to Constitution—or, at least, to a thesis in its neighborhood.

The only qualities of which we are introspectively aware are qualities of external things if they are qualities of anything at all. But intuitively, we are aware of phenomenal character when we introspect. The conclusion to draw is that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience consists in, and is no more than, the complex of qualities the experience represents. Thus, the phenomenal character of the experience of red just is red.<sup>19</sup>

**19.** Neither the appeal to Moore nor the appeal to introspection succeeds, it seems to me, in lending any support to Constitution. Let us first consider Moore. The extracts from Moore given above are often cited by the proponents of transparency, but they neglect the surrounding context. The extracts occur in a context in which Moore is explaining why Idealists commit the

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<sup>19</sup>*Consciousness Revisited*, p. 119. Tye's conclusion uses the expression 'phenomenal character' whereas Constitution is formulated using 'phenomenology'; this is only a terminological difference, and it is not significant. Tye's conclusion talks about representation whereas Constitution talks about presentation. This *is* a significant difference, but not for present purposes. In the discussion of the argument below (§21), I shall treat the two as interchangeable.

error he attributes to them. According to Moore, the Idealists are led to their characteristic views (in particular, to the claim that *esse* is *percipi*) because they identify *what is experienced* with *the experience of it*; they identify *blue*, for example, with *the sensation of blue*.<sup>20</sup> The Idealists commit this error because, Moore explains, in introspection, though the *blue* is easily isolated, the other element (*experience, sensation, consciousness*) remains elusive. When one introspects, one encounters only the *blue*; the other element escapes one. The Idealists are thus led, Moore thinks, to mistakenly identify *blue* with the *experience/ sensation/ consciousness of blue*.<sup>21</sup>

In “Refutation of Idealism,” Moore is not defending the idea that experience is transparent or diaphanous. In the second extract above (§18), Moore talks about how consciousness “seems to vanish” and how sensation is “as if it were diaphanous.” He does not say here that consciousness actually *does* vanish or that sensation *is* diaphanous, only that consciousness *seems* to vanish and that sensation is *as if it were* diaphanous.<sup>22</sup> Moore adds right after the second extract:

Yet it [sensation/ consciousness] *can* be distinguished if we look attentively 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. (“Refutation of Idealism,” p. 25)

Moore thinks that we can attend to sensation/ consciousness and *see* it. Earlier in the paragraph, he writes the following to help the reader direct attention to it:

The true analysis of a sensation . . . is as follows. . . . A sensation is, in reality, a case of ‘knowing’ or ‘being aware of’ or ‘experiencing’ something. When we know that the

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<sup>20</sup>“Refutation of Idealism,” pp. 19-20. I will not pause to assess whether Moore is being fair to the Idealists.

<sup>21</sup>In his discussion of transparency, Moore talks interchangeably of “sensation of blue,” “consciousness of blue,” and “experience of blue.” In my discussion of Moore, I too do not distinguish them.

<sup>22</sup>Note that Moore’s explanation of the Idealists’ error does not require him to affirm outright that consciousness *does* vanish or that sensation *is* diaphanous.

sensation of blue exists, the fact that we know is that there exists an awareness of blue. And this awareness . . . has a perfectly distinct and unique relation to blue . . . This relation is just that which we mean in every case by 'knowing'. ("Refutation of Idealism," pp. 24-5)

**20.** Transparency of experience is no part, then, of Moore's position in "Refutation of Idealism." Indeed, Moore accepts in this essay a contrary idea. Moore thinks that we can attend to experience/ sensation/ consciousness and just *see* that it is a knowing. Since Moore thinks that we sometimes experience material things, he is able to reject the Idealist difficulties about the existence of material things quite simply:

I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations . . . The question requiring to be asked about material things is thus not: What reason have we for supposing that anything exists *corresponding* to our sensations? but: What reason have we for supposing that material things do *not* exist, since *their* existence has precisely the same evidence as that of our sensations? ("Refutation of Idealism," p. 30)

Moore's position in "Refutation of Idealism," it should be remarked, is unacceptable, even strange. It is a strange idea that we can introspect experience/ sensation/ consciousness and just *see* that it is a knowing. Furthermore, the idea that experience is a knowing sits uncomfortably with the thought that material things are presented in experience. As we have seen, it is against this combination of ideas that Russell argued in *Problems of Philosophy*. Russell accepted that sensing is a knowing and concluded that the objects of direct awareness are sense-data, not physical objects. Moore himself came to realize that his position in "Refutation of Idealism" was incoherent and, over time, moved to a position similar to Russell's.<sup>23</sup> When Moore reprinted

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<sup>23</sup>Moore had a lifelong interest in perception, but after 1903, when he published "Refutation of Idealism," he never returns to the naive stance of this essay. His position on perception undergoes several major shifts in later years. In "Status of Sense-Data" (1913-14), Moore inclines to a Lockean theory. In "Some Judgments of Perception" (1918), he finds a contrary position, Phenomenalism, attractive. By 1925, when he publishes "A Defence of

“Refutation of Idealism” in his *Philosophical Studies*, he expressed doubt whether he ought to have included the essay in the collection. Moore wrote in the Preface, “this paper now appears to me to be very confused, as well as to embody a good many down-right mistakes” (*Philosophical Studies*, p. viii).

**21.** An appeal to “Refutation of Idealism” does not help, then, support the case for Constitution. Let us now turn to Tye’s argument which, recall, runs as follows:

[(i)] The only qualities of which we are introspectively aware are qualities of external things . . . . [(ii)] we are aware of phenomenal character when we introspect. The conclusion to draw is that [(iii)] the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience consists in, and is no more than, the complex of qualities the experience represents.

Two observations about this argument: First, the argument brings into play a dubious notion of introspective awareness. On the one hand, introspective awareness is supposed to be special, different from experiential awareness in general. It is supposed to be a way of gaining knowledge about the subjective dimension of experience; this is what motivates premiss (ii). On the other hand, the argument requires that introspective awareness extend invariably to all qualities represented in experience, even those external qualities of which one possesses no knowledge. For, if introspective awareness were not to extend to one such quality, say *q*, then the premisses would not allow us to conclude, as is required by (iii), that *q* is a part of the phenomenal character. Introspective awareness, as the notion is used in the argument, seems

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Common Sense,” Phenomenalism falls out of favor. One persistent theme through all these changes is that the objects “directly apprehended” in perception, according to Moore, are *not* physical objects. In “Some Judgments of Perception” and later papers, Moore calls the directly apprehended objects ‘sense-data’. Moore was convinced of the existence of sense-data, but he was unsure of their nature. In “Some Judgments of Perception,” he seriously entertains the idea that the sense-datum apprehended when one looks at an opaque object (e.g., an inkstand) is a part of the surface of the object. But in “Visual Sense-Data” (1957), Moore firmly rejects the idea and holds that visual sense-data are non-physical. Moore now takes the relationship of sense-data to physical objects to be a hard open problem. Even the thoughtful philosopher of common sense is led to accept sense-data despite all their well-known problems!

little different from experiential awareness in general. We could drop all mention of introspection from the argument without affecting at all its probative force.

Second, and this is the more important point, the argument assumes that the phenomenal character of experience consists solely of qualities of things. Without this assumption, the premisses, (i) and (ii), do not allow us to move to the conclusion. Suppose, for example, that phenomenal character consists, in part, of particulars we can introspect. The two premisses remain true, but the conclusion, (iii), is false. I shall argue below that the assumption that phenomenal character consists solely of qualities is false, as is the weaker assumption that the phenomenal character consists, in part, of qualities (see part IV).<sup>24</sup>

**22.** It is important to separate Constitution from the other ideas that are often put under the head of “transparency.” There is the idea that when one introspects one never encounters experience itself, only the items to which the experience is directed. As Glüer puts it in an extract given earlier, “in introspection, it is as if experience saw right through itself and got in direct touch with material objects and their qualities.”<sup>25</sup> This idea has some plausibility, but it does not mention phenomenology and it does not entail Constitution.

There is a related idea that *does* mention phenomenology and that some philosophers think can serve as a stepping-stone to Constitution. According to this idea, introspection shows that features of an experience *e* are no part of the phenomenology of *e*, for experience is transparent to introspection, and introspection passes right through the experience to the object. But there are two difficulties here. First, it is assumed that the phenomenology of an experience *e* is the object of the introspection of *e*, and this assumption is not obviously true. Perhaps the phenomenology of experience *e* is not the object but the phenomenology of the introspection of

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<sup>24</sup>The problem with Tye’s argument remains even if we reformulate it so that it allows the phenomenal character of experience to include represented relations.

<sup>25</sup>Here is how Matthew Kennedy explains the idea in his “Heirs of Nothing” (p. 586): “Experience has no presence to us distinct from the presence of its objects. . . . The end result of introspective success—the state of being aware of one’s experience—is not a state in which one is presented with a phenomenologically distinctive item, one’s experience, to which one can selectively attend.”

*e*; perhaps *qua* experience, introspection is no different from the experience introspected.<sup>26</sup>

Second, the idea cannot serve as a stepping-stone to Constitution. The idea only excludes some items from the make up of the phenomenology; it gives no positive account of the items that do constitute phenomenology. So, it does not put us in a position to reach Constitution.

One may respond to the last objection by strengthening the transparency idea: phenomenology pertains, one may say, to the objects to which an experience is directed (as opposed to the experience itself). The only aspects of objects, the argument continues, that can be relevant to phenomenology are their presented qualities and relations. Hence, Constitution, or something close to it, must be true. The difficulty lies here in the middle step. One can accept that phenomenology pertains to the objects presented; yet one can, without any fear of inconsistency, deny that presented qualities and relations are the only aspects of objects that are relevant to phenomenology. In fact, I will be taking advantage of this very possibility in the positive account given below.

Finally, there is the idea that in experience some external objects and their features are *immediately* presented to consciousness. The presence is immediate in the sense that it is not mediated by any representatives (such as images and sense-data). This idea, too, can be accepted, but it says nothing about phenomenology and is consistent with the rejection of Constitution. Immediate presence should be distinguished from *unconditioned* presence. An item (e.g., the color quality yellow) may be immediately present to consciousness; that is, the presence may not be mediated by any image, representation, and such. It does not follow, however, that the presentation is not *conditioned* by a variety of factors (e.g., the character of light). Unmediated presence of a color does not amount to transparent transmission of the color to the soul. Different factors may condition the transmission, and thus the presentation, and may result in experiences that differ in phenomenology. Immediate presence of color quality does not imply that the color quality constitutes phenomenology.

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<sup>26</sup>If introspection is not an experience but a thinking, one directed to the phenomenology, then the fact that “in introspection, it is as if experience sees right through itself” allows us to conclude nothing about phenomenology.

#### IV. Appearances and Phenomenology

23. How should we conceive, then, of phenomenology? I suggest we begin by recognizing that a particular kind of identity relation obtains in the world: *subjective-identity* (notation: “SubjIdentity”). This is a six place relation,

$$(4) \quad \text{SubjIdentity}(o, p, s; o^*, p^*, s^*),$$

and it may be thought of as relating two triples, each triple consisting of an object, a perceiver, and a situation. Display (4) may be spelled out thus:

the presentation of object  $o$  to person  $p$ 's consciousness in perceptual situation  $s$  is subjectively identical to the presentation of object  $o^*$  to person  $p^*$ 's consciousness in perceptual situation  $s^*$ .

Consider an application of this notion. Imagine you volunteer to be a subject for a psychological experiment. You find yourself before a stage on which there are various objects that can be moved and illuminated in various ways. The experimenters insert probes in your brain with which they can monitor and affect your neural processes. (You knew what you were getting in to, and you still volunteered. Your dedication to science is admirable!) The following can happen. Situation-1: You are presented with a yellow cube, and you can see some of its edges and surfaces. Then the experimenters move the cube away from you, creating situation-2. The cube fills less of your “visual field”; it “looks smaller” to you. Here we have an example in which the relation “SubjIdentity” fails to obtain: the presentation of the cube to your consciousness in situation-1 is not subjectively identical to its presentation to your consciousness in situation-2. The cube has not changed in size, but its presentation to your consciousness is different. Consider now situation-3: The clever experimenters leave the cube where it was in situation-2 and stimulate your brain to amplify the activities of certain neurons. You find that the cube begins to look exactly the way it looked in situation-1. Now, the presentation of the cube to your consciousness in situation-1 is subjectively identical to its presentation to your

consciousness in situation-3.

**24.** I suggest we think of *appearances* as capturing the commonalities between subjectively-identical presentations. Just as qualities capture identities among things along various dimensions (such as shape and color), and numbers captures identities among totalities along various quantitative dimensions, similarly appearances capture identities along a certain subjective dimension. Let ‘ $\text{Appearance}_s(o, p)$ ’ abbreviate ‘*the appearance manifested by  $o$  to  $p$ ’s consciousness in situation  $s$* ’. Then, the principle governing appearances is this:

(5)  $\text{Appearance}_s(o, p) = \text{Appearance}_{s^*}(o^*, p^*)$  iff  $\text{SubjIdentity}(o, p, s; o^*, p^*, s^*)$ .

In the shift from situation-1 to situation-2 above, the cube did not change in shape, size, or color, but the appearance it manifested to your consciousness in situation-1 was different from the one it manifested in situation-2. The same goes for situation-2 and situation-3. Here not only did the cube remain unchanged, the external perceptual environment also remained unchanged; yet the appearances were different because of differences in brain function.

In general, appearances manifested by objects depend on a multitude of factors, including the state of the subject’s sense-organs, the subject’s actions, and the subject’s beliefs. As you look at the duck-rabbit figure, you can intentionally switch between two gestalts, of seeing the figure as a duck and of seeing it as a rabbit. The appearance the figure manifests to you depends on your choice. For another example, suppose you are looking at a bush, and a friend informs you that there is a bird in it. The appearance that the bush-cum-bird manifests to you can shift; the bird can suddenly stand out from the surrounding branches and leaves. This last example brings out a noteworthy point: the object positions in the subjective-identity relation can be filled not only by familiar things such as birds, but also by complexes of objects. Indeed, this position, as I conceive of it, can be filled by universals and facts, and even by the entire presentational complex of an experience.

**25.** Let us return to the psychological experiment. The following can happen. Situation-4: You are simultaneously presented with two perfect spheres of exactly the same size, one blue and the

other yellow, and also with a cube that exactly matches the second sphere in color. The two spheres, let us imagine, are equidistant from your eyes and located symmetrically with respect to them. Let us imagine, furthermore, that the experimenters engage in no funny business. The presentations of the three objects to your consciousness are not subjectively identical; the appearances the objects manifest to you are all different. Nonetheless, the presentations of the two spheres are subjectively identical along certain dimensions—the shape and size dimensions, as we might put it. Also, the presentation of the second sphere and the cube are also subjectively identical along a certain different dimension—the color dimension, as we might also put it. The example shows that there are fine-grained notions of subjective-identity—subjective-identity-relative-to-dimension- $D$  (notation: “SubjIdentity $_D$ ”)—and the correlated fine-grained notions of appearance. We should recognize, therefore, the following principle, as well as parallel others governing shape-, smell-, texture-, and other appearances:

- (6) Color-appearance $_s(o, p) =$  Color-appearance $_{s^*}(o^*, p^*)$  iff  
SubjIdentity $_{\text{Color}}(o, p, s; o^*, p^*, s^*)$ .

In situation-4, the second sphere and the cube manifest to you the same color appearance, but different shape appearances. In this situation, the color quality yellow as well as the fact of the cube’s being yellow, for example, are among the items that are present to your consciousness. (I am assuming a simple view of color.) And the color appearance the cube manifests is also the appearance manifested by the color quality yellow. However, as with objects, the same color quality can manifest different appearances in different perceptual situations (and even in the same situation). The experimenters may change the lighting a bit, and the quality yellow may remain present to your consciousness but may now manifest a slightly different appearance to you. The experimenters may change the lighting more drastically and the color of the cube may cease to be present to you. The cube may, nonetheless, manifest a color appearance.

Manifestation of color appearance does not require the presence of color quality. If the color quality of an object is present, though, then the color appearance of the object is identical to the appearance of the color quality.

26. Let us note some facts about appearances.

(i) Appearances are not qualities; shape appearances are not shapes, and color appearances are not colors. Appearances are like qualities in that they are general items, not particulars, as Russell supposed them to be. Just as one and the same quality can be instantiated in several different objects, one and the same appearance may be manifested by several different objects. However, appearances cannot be identified with qualities. Appearances capture an entirely different kind of identity and difference than do qualities. Appearances are bound up essentially with sensory consciousness; not so for qualities. Appearances depend on perceptual conditions; not so for qualities. Appearances are never *instantiated* in things; they are *manifested* to a consciousness by things. Again, not so for qualities. Appearances and qualities are not only distinct; they belong to entirely different categories.

(ii) Appearances are not relational properties of things. The manifestation of size appearances, for example, cannot be identified with the obtaining of a relational property such as “being of such-and-such size and located at so-and-so distance from the subject.” For such a relational property may continue to obtain while the appearance manifested changes, as in situation-2 and situation-3 described above. Furthermore, different relational properties may obtain and yet the appearance manifested may be the same, as in situation-1 and situation-3. Relational properties do not capture the identities and differences that pertain to appearances.

(iii) Appearances are not private. They are not confined to one consciousness or even to one species or one region of spacetime. The same appearance may be manifested to two creatures belonging to different species and separated by a vast stretch of spacetime.

(iv) Appearances can contain other appearances as *constituents*. Imagine, for example, that you are holding a ball and also looking at it. Then the overall appearance manifested by the ball contains as constituents a visual appearance and a tactile appearance. And these latter appearances contain as constituents more fine-grained appearances such as color-, shape-, and texture-appearances. The relation of constitution between appearances is governed by the following principle: if appearance *a* constitutes appearance *a\** then, necessarily, whenever *a\** is manifested then so also is *a*.

(v) The structure of appearances may or may not be isomorphic with that of the presentational complex. A uniformly white wall may be present to consciousness; its color may

also be present. However, because of the peculiar pattern of ambient light, the one color quality white may manifest many different color appearances. A variant example: because of some peculiar goings on in the brain of a deranged person, the presentation to his consciousness of the wall may be subjectively identical to the presentation to a normal person of a white wall with blood drops on it. The deranged person is hallucinating blood drops, even though the presentational complex contains none.<sup>27</sup> This illustrates how the present proposal accommodates illusions and hallucinations.

27. I am now in a position to give an account of the phenomenology of experience. First, let me observe that I favor, and I am working with, a highly minimal conception of experience. Some philosophers take experiences to be *acts* of the mind, which often are conceived of as acts by which the subject cognitively grasps the presented objects. Others take experiences to be *events*—perhaps mental, perhaps physical. Yet others take them to be *processes*. I wish to stay neutral on all this ontological stuff. What matters for my purposes is that experiences are so individuated that they fix a subject and a perceptual situation. And I understand the notion “perceptual situation” broadly. Even a hallucinating subject is in a perceptual situation, as I understand this notion. So, given an experience  $e$ , the notions “the subject of  $e$ ” and “the perceptual situation of  $e$ ” are well-defined. It thus makes sense to speak of *the appearance manifested by an item  $i$  in experience  $e$*  (notation:  $\text{Appearance}_e(i)$ ). Let  $i$  be an item presented in  $e$ ,  $p$  the subject of  $e$ , and  $s$  the perceptual situation of  $e$ . Then:

$$\text{Appearance}_e(i) =_{\text{df}} \text{Appearance}_s(i, p).$$

Note that ‘ $\text{Appearance}_e(i)$ ’ denotes the total appearance manifested by  $i$  in  $e$ . This appearance may have several different constituents (e.g., a color appearance) that are also manifested by  $i$ . It will be useful to recognize a relation, “*manifestation in  $e$* ” (notation:  $M_e$ ), that relates each item presented in  $e$  with the one or more appearances the item manifests in experience  $e$ . Furthermore, let us say that an appearance  $a$  *is manifested in  $e$*  iff  $a$  is an appearance manifested

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<sup>27</sup>Yet another example: When one looks at the Hermann Grid, there is nothing in the presentational complex that corresponds to the shifting and ghostly grey spots one sees.

in  $e$  by some item  $i$ .

The phenomenology of  $e$  (notation:  $\Phi_e$ ) may now be characterized thus: it is the appearance manifested in  $e$  by the presentational complex  $\Pi_e$ :

$$\Phi_e =_{\text{df}} \text{Appearance}_e(\Pi_e).$$

The phenomenology of an experience is constituted not by the qualities and relations presented in it, but by the appearances manifested in it.

**28.** The notion of phenomenology is often explained in terms of “what it’s like” for the subject, and the reader will have noticed that I make no reference to it in the above explanation. “What it’s like” is a legitimate notion, I think, but it is different from the notion of phenomenology I wish to isolate. First, “what it’s like” is a broader notion. There can be a “what it’s like” for a subject as he entertains a thought or enjoys a daydream. There can be a “what it’s like” for me as I think of Everest or about my forthcoming vacation. However, when I think of Everest, for example, I am not *presented* with anything. My thoughts are directed to Everest, but that great peak does not present itself to my consciousness, sitting as I am thousands of miles away from it. The directedness of thought is entirely different from the directedness of experience.

Directedness of thoughts does not require the existence of objects, let alone their presence. And if there is no presence, there is no appearance and, thus, no phenomenology, as I understand this notion. There’s no denying, though, that there is a “what it’s like” for me as I think of Everest.

Second, the “what it’s like” of an experience can include elements beyond appearances manifested in the experience. What the experience of seeing Everest was like for a subject can include reactions such as that it was exhilarating or disappointing. These reactions depend on a complex of psychological factors and are not appearances of anything to the subject. They are no part of what I am calling “the phenomenology of the experience.” Some philosophers speak of the “phenomenal force” of an experience, a force that renders perceptual beliefs irresistible.<sup>28</sup> This force is plausibly a part of the “what it’s like” of an experience. But it is not an appearance

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<sup>28</sup>Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist,” p. 574, fn. 37.

or a constituent of an appearance of a thing, and it is no part of phenomenology, as I understand this notion.

Third, the “what it’s like” of an experience pertains primarily to the subject; the presentational complex of the experience is incidental to it. Phenomenology, on the other hand, pertains primarily to presentational complex and its elements. The subject, though not incidental, is, to use the Moorean metaphor, as if it were transparent.

**29.** Russell assigned appearances a foundational role in cognition. He held that appearances fall among the first objects of knowledge and reference. Experience, according to Russell, acquaints us with appearances and thus enables us to name them and to think and talk about them. On the picture I am painting, though, experience acquaints us with nothing. So, what should I say about the role appearances play in cognition?

## V. The Equivalence Principle

**30.** The following principle helps reveal the role of appearances:

**The Equivalence Principle.** Let  $e$  and  $e^*$  be possible experiences that are *subjectively identical*—that is, they possess the same phenomenology. Then,  $\Gamma_e$  is equivalent to  $\Gamma_{e^*}$ , in the sense that  $e$  renders a transition rational iff  $e^*$  renders the counterpart transition rational.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The notion “subjective identity” in play here is different from the notion “subjective indistinguishability” often invoked in contemporary philosophical discussions of perception. The following differences are noteworthy. (i) “Subjective indistinguishability” is defined in terms of the subject’s inability to distinguish experiences; not so for “subjective identity,” which refers to a factual relation between experiences. Two experiences may fail to be subjectively identical—there may be a subtle but substantial difference in the appearances manifested in them—but the subject may be unable to distinguish them (because, for instance, of limitations of attention and memory). (ii) “Subjective indistinguishability” fails to be a transitive relation; not so for “subjective identity.” (iii) “Subjective indistinguishability” is sometimes invoked to explain away the subjective dimension of experience. (This motivation is especially prominent among the Naive Realists.) “Subjective identity,” on the other hand, is not at all suited for this

The notion “counterpart transition” used in the Principle is best appreciated through an example. Imagine a subject  $X$ , who accepts a view  $v$ , in three possible situations. In the first,  $X$  undergoes a visual experience  $e$ ; recognizes the boy, Mel, he is presented with; and issues out loud the judgment “that boy is Mel” ( $J$ ). In the second,  $X$  undergoes a subjectively identical experience  $e^*$  in which he is presented not with Mel but with Mel’s identical twin, Mel\*.  $X$  fails to recognize Mel\* and issues a judgment,  $J^*$ , by saying out loud the same words as before, “that boy is Mel,” and making the same demonstrative gesture as before. In the third possibility, our subject undergoes a subjectively identical hallucinatory experience,  $e'$ , and, not knowing he is hallucinating, issues a judgment,  $J'$ , again using the same words and the same demonstrative gesture. In this example, the three judgments— $J$ ,  $J^*$ , and  $J'$ —are not the same, for the demonstrative elements in them do not denote the same thing. (In  $J'$  the demonstrative element denotes nothing.) Nonetheless, the three judgments are counterparts of one another, as also are the three transitions from the acceptance of view  $v$  to these judgments. The Equivalence Principle implies that if one of these transitions is rational then so also are the other two:

$$\begin{aligned} [\Gamma_e: (\text{Accept}: v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept}: J)] \text{ iff } [\Gamma_{e^*}: (\text{Accept}: v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept}: J^*)] \\ \text{iff } [\Gamma_{e'}: (\text{Accept}: v) \longrightarrow (\text{Accept}: J')]. \end{aligned}$$

The three givens— $\Gamma_e$ ,  $\Gamma_{e^*}$ , and  $\Gamma_{e'}$ —are distinct from one another but, in virtue of the Equivalence Principle, they are all equivalent. The resulting views of the subject in the three situations are also distinct but are counterparts of one another.<sup>30</sup>

**31.** Let us analyze a little the perceptual situation in which our subject  $X$  finds himself in the

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purpose, for it presupposes the reality of the subjective dimension of experience.

<sup>30</sup>In *Empiricism and Experience*, I conceived of the given as capturing the rational role of an experience *purely from the subject’s point of view* and, therefore, formulated the Equivalence Principle as requiring that subjectively identical experiences yield *identical* givens. This conception of the given requires a highly abstract notion of transition. I have come to think it is clearer and better to work with a more concrete notion, one that allows the inclusion of external elements in transitions. It is for this reason that the present formulation of the Principle requires only that the givens be equivalent, not that they be identical. The root idea of the Principle remains unchanged, though, in this shift in formulation.

first possibility envisioned above. Here, the boy Mel manifests a certain appearance  $a$  to  $X$ 's consciousness. This appearance is distinct from Mel, and it is not the denotation of  $X$ 's token—say,  $t$ —of ‘that boy’. Still, the appearance bears an important relation to the token  $t$ . Let us call this relation *connotation*. Let us say that token  $t$  *connotes* appearance  $a$ , and let us call  $a$  *the connotation of  $t$* .<sup>31</sup> The *denotation* of token  $t$  is a flesh-and-blood person; the *connotation* of  $t$ , on the other hand, is an abstract appearance. As  $X$ 's viewpoint on Mel shifts, the appearances Mel manifests are liable to shift, and hence the connotation of different tokens  $X$  produces of ‘that boy’ are also liable to shift; but the denotation of the different tokens would remain the same enduring boy, Mel. The situation is similar with  $X$ 's token of ‘Mel’ as  $X$  issues his perceptual judgment: the token denotes the boy, Mel, and connotes the same appearance,  $a$ . It is the identity of the connotation that underwrites the rationality of the transitions from  $X$ 's view to  $X$ 's judgment  $J$  (“that boy is Mel”). Note that there is no intrinsic/semantic connection between a token of (e.g.) ‘the boy’ and any particular appearance. Which appearance, if any, a token connotes depends on the view (and, of course, on experience). Hence, appearances cannot by themselves render a judgment such as  $J$  rational; what they render rational is a transition.

Now let us turn to the second situation considered above. Here our subject looks at the twin Mel\* and undergoes a visual experience  $e^*$ , subjectively identical to  $e$ . Furthermore, the subject  $X$  issues the counterpart judgment  $J^*$  by uttering the same words, ‘that boy is Mel’. Now the denotation of  $X$ 's token of ‘that boy’ is different from what it was in the first case, but the connotation of the token is the same, as also is the connotation of the token of ‘Mel’. It is the sameness of connotations across the two cases that explains (in part) why judgments  $J$  and  $J^*$  are counterparts of one another and why the two transitions involving them are equally rational.

Virtually the same analysis carries over to the third situation. Here our subject is

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<sup>31</sup>I am using John Stuart Mill's term ‘connotation’, but I am putting it to a use different from Mill's. My use is closer to, but not identical with, Locke's use of ‘signification’. According to Locke, “*Words in their primary or immediate Signification stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him that uses them.*” (*Essay*, III.2.2) Earlier in the *Essay*, one of the several explanations Locke gives of ‘idea’ is in terms of appearance. In the “Epistle to the Reader,” for instance, Locke refers to a simple idea as “*that simple appearance, which the Mind has in its view, or perceives in it self, when that Idea is said to be in it*” (p. 13). I have chosen ‘connotation’ over Locke's ‘signification’ because I have used ‘signification’ in earlier work to designate a different relation between language/thought and the world.

hallucinating, and the token of ‘that boy’ fails to denote anything. Still, the token possesses the same connotation as in the previous two possibilities. The subject’s judgment is a counterpart of the judgments in the two earlier cases, and the same holds of the transition. The transition is just as rational as in the earlier cases.

**32.** The notion of connotation, like that of denotation, is applicable not only to tokens but also to types. And it is applicable to singular terms as well as to general terms, so long as these terms are amenable to a certain kind of perceptual use. For example, a name such as ‘the Washington Monument’ possesses a denotation as well as a connotation. The denotation is a landmark; the connotation is a complex, which we may call a *phenomenological profile* and which captures aspects of the subject’s use of the name in possible perceptual situations. One relevant aspect of use is use in *identification judgments*, judgments such as “this is the Washington Monument” and “that is the Washington Monument.” The Monument tends to manifest different appearances as one views it from various vantage points and in various circumstances. Some of these appearances render rational transitions to identification judgments (relative to a view); others do not. The phenomenological profile of the name may, as a rough first approximation, be thought of as a function from perceptual situations to these appearances that underwrite transitions to identifying judgments.<sup>32</sup> Note that connotation is distinct from Fregean *Sinn*. Connotation is tied essentially to perception; not so for Fregean *Sinn*. Connotation fails to determine denotation; not so for Fregean *Sinn*. Finally, the connotation of any term is liable to vary from user to user; again, not so for Fregean *Sinn*.

**33.** The Equivalence Principle is internalist and subjectivist in its stance on rationality. In assessments of rationality, the Principle dictates, we must give due weight to the subject’s viewpoint and to the subjective dimension of experience. The Principle sustains the following internalist and subjectivist idea: Imagine two subjects that accept counterpart views and whose

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<sup>32</sup>This account of phenomenological profile of a term is not only rough, it is incomplete. There are several different kinds of linkages between appearances and uses of terms in perceptual situations, and these different kinds would need to be recognized by any satisfactory account of phenomenological profile.

acceptance of these views is equally rational. The subjects, let us imagine, undergo subjectively identical experiences; they engage in counterpart reasoning; they make counterpart choices and issue counterpart judgments. Perhaps one subject is an ordinary human being and the other is a human brain that was envatted at some point in its life. Now, according to the internalist-subjectivist idea, the judgments of the one are just as rational as the judgments of the other. From an external point of view, the situations of the two subjects are quite different: one subject possesses (we can suppose) mostly true beliefs about the world while the other is thoroughly deluded. Still, the internalist-subjectivist thought, sustained by the Equivalence Principle, has it that both subjects are equally rational in their judgments.<sup>33</sup>

**34.** The Equivalence Principle makes available an internalist-subjectivist stance on rationality, but one that is free of any commitment to a Cartesian conception of subjectivity. In particular, Equivalence Principle, does not imply any of the following:

- (i) that there are private entities, mental or otherwise;
- (ii) that there is nothing to an experience beyond its phenomenology;
- (iii) that the subject has privileged access to, or grasp of, any items—phenomenological or otherwise;
- (iv) that there are any propositions that are indubitable, incorrigible, or self-evident—or even that there are any propositions that are rendered *prima facie* justified by experience; and
- (v) that when a belief is rational/justified, the subject has access to—let alone that she is in a position to set out—a justification for the belief.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>A variant of the example may help underline the internalist point: the deluded subject may undergo subjectively identical experiences not because of an envatting but because of a terrible malfunction in the brain. Still, the subject's judgments would remain equally rational. Sameness of rationality cannot be traced to sameness of excellence in brain function.

<sup>34</sup>Even an anti-Cartesian thinker such as Christopher Hill can succumb to some of the charms of Cartesianism. In "Content of Visual Experience," Hill accepts the idea that "the phenomenological dimension of an experience is a dimension that is *given to* the subject in virtue of having the experience, so it is a dimension that the subject grasps or appreciates." (220) A little later he writes "experience is exhausted by phenomenology, where phenomenology has

I argued in *E&E* that the source of problematic conceptions of subjectivity is not the Equivalence Principle but erroneous ideas about the rational role of experience (such as that the given in experience is propositional). The Equivalence Principle, I want to suggest, is the proper formulation of the demand that, in empirical cognition, the subject's viewpoint be respected. The Principle is subjectivist and internalist to just the right degree, and its preservation seems to me to be a desideratum on any account of empirical reasoning.

**35.** It is a characteristic feature of Cartesian conceptions of experience, such as Russell's, that they take appearances to fall among the first objects of knowledge and denotation. The Equivalence Principle, in conjunction with the hypothetical given, makes available an alternative: *appearances are not the first objects of knowledge and denotation; instead, they underwrite the rationality of transitions, and they help determine counterpart relations.*

## VI. Dual-Component Presentationalism

**36.** I am associating with each experience  $e$  four items:

$\Gamma_e =_{\text{Df}}$  the given in experience  $e$ ,

$\Pi_e =_{\text{Df}}$  the more-or-less determinate and more-or-less structured portion of the world presented in  $e$  (= the presentational complex of  $e$ ),

$\Phi_e =_{\text{Df}}$  the phenomenology of  $e$ , and

$M_e =_{\text{Df}}$  the manifestation relation restricted to  $e$ .

**37.** About the given  $\Gamma_e$ , the principal point to note is that it is hypothetical and is governed by the Equivalence Principle. About the presentational complex  $\Pi_e$ , the following points are worth noting:

(i)  $\Pi_e$  is a complex made up of all the elements to which experience  $e$  is directed. We

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to do with qualitative character of experience, and each qualitative characteristic corresponds to a way of appearing" (229).

may think of  $\Pi_e$  as a more-or-less structured maximal portion of the world to which  $e$  is directed. If  $e$  is directed to an element  $i$ , then let us say that  $i$  is an *element of*  $\Pi_e$ .<sup>35</sup>

(ii) Only actual items can be elements of  $\Pi_e$ , not impossible or merely possible ones.

(iii) Mind-independent items as well as mind-dependent ones, external items as well as internal ones may be elements of  $\Pi_e$ .

(iv) Only atomic facts can be elements of  $\Pi_e$ ; a fact such as “some things are not red” cannot be an element of  $\Pi_e$ .

(v) If a fact (e.g.) that  $a$  bears the relation  $R$  to  $b$  is an element of  $\Pi_e$  then  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $R$  are also elements of  $\Pi_e$ .

(vi) A part or a feature of an element of  $\Pi_e$  is, however, not necessarily an element of  $\Pi_e$ . A yellow bird may be presented to one’s consciousness in an experience but not, say, the bird’s tail, nor the feature that it sports a black spot on its back.

**38.** The phenomenology  $\Phi_e$  is nothing other than the appearance manifested in  $e$  by  $\Pi_e$ . The following points are worth noting about appearances and about  $\Phi_e$ :

(i) Appearances are not universals; indeed, they belong to an entirely different category than universals.

(ii) Appearances can be grouped in families (e.g., visual appearances and touch appearances) and in various classes (e.g., color and shape).

(iii) Appearances stand in various similarity relations to one another. A color appearance may be more similar to another color appearance than to a third one with respect to brightness but not with respect to, say, hue.

(iv) Appearances can be complex, structured items. When one looks at a yellow bird, the bird manifests a complex appearance that is constituted of, among others, some color appearances and some shape appearances. If appearance  $a$  is a constituent of appearance  $a^*$  then necessarily whenever  $a^*$  is manifested so also is  $a$ .

(v) One and the same unchanging element—universal or particular—can manifest

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<sup>35</sup> It follows that  $\Pi_e$  is an element of itself, but nothing heavy hinges on this. The point is merely a consequence of a terminological convention, one that I am adopting because it enables a more compact exposition.

different appearances. As the light changes, the bird one is viewing manifests different color appearances, even though the color of the bird does not change.

(vi) Different elements can manifest the same appearance: two differently-colored birds can manifest the same appearance, and they can do so within a single experience.

(vii) Phenomenology  $\Phi_e$  is a whole, structured by the relation “constitution,” that consists of appearances. Included among these appearances are those manifested in experience  $e$  by the elements of  $e$ .

**39.** Finally, the following claims hold of the manifestation relation  $M_e$  and its relata  $\Pi_e$  and  $\Phi_e$ :

(i) Manifestation does not imply acquaintance. An appearance may be manifested to a subject’s consciousness even though the appearance is not known to the subject and even though the subject cannot direct her thoughts to it.

(ii) Every element of  $\Pi_e$  manifests an appearance in  $e$ . Hence, the domain of the manifestation relation  $M_e$  consists precisely of the elements of  $\Pi_e$ .

(iii) For every constituent appearance of  $\Phi_e$ , there is an element of  $\Pi_e$  that manifests that appearance in  $e$ . Hence, the range of  $M_e$  consists of  $\Phi_e$  and all its constituent appearances.

(iv) The domain and range of the manifestation relation  $M_e$  do not overlap. Appearances are completely distinct from the kinds of items that make up  $\Pi_e$ .

(v)  $\Pi_e$  and  $\Phi_e$  need not be structurally similar. It can happen that  $\Pi_e$  possesses a simple structure while  $\Phi_e$  a complex one. And the other way around:  $\Phi_e$  may possess a simple structure while  $\Pi_e$  a complex one.

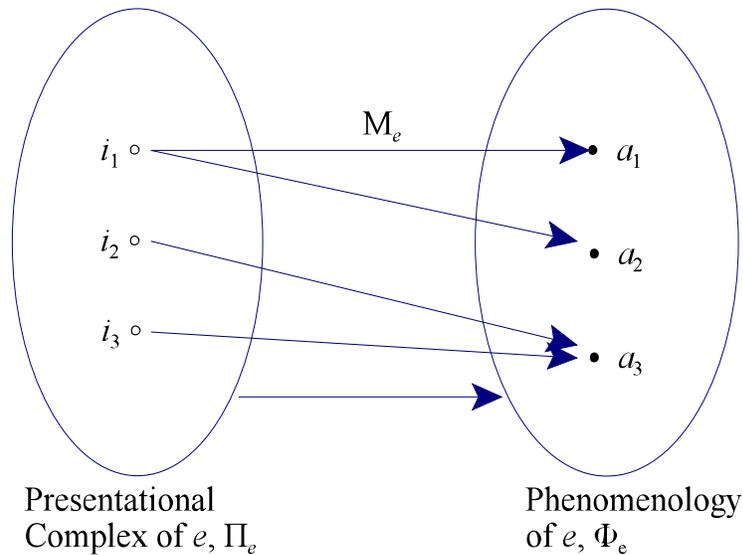
(vi) Two experiences directed to different presentational complexes can manifest the same phenomenology. For example, the visual experiences of two subjects looking at two different birds would be directed to different presentational complexes, but the experiences may well possess the same phenomenology.

(vii) Two experiences directed to the same presentational complex can differ in their phenomenology. The very same elements may manifest different appearances in different experiences (say, because of differences in environmental conditions).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>On this point my position has shifted. In “Account of Conscious Experience,” I subscribed to a version of transparency that conflicts with (v). That version of transparency led

40. An experience  $e$  can be represented as follows. Here the arrows indicate the manifestation relation  $M_e$ .



**Figure 1:** A picture of experience  $e$

Note that an element of  $\Pi_e$  and an associated appearance—for example,  $i_1$  and  $a_1$ —can themselves be complex and can exhibit a structure similar to the one displayed above.

41. Three general features of the above account deserve special notice. First, the account accommodates illusions and hallucinations but without attributing any content to experience.

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me to introduce sense-images as objects presented in hallucinations. I went on to invoke sense-images in the account of illusions. Miloš Vuletić and Bosuk Yoon objected, independently of one another, to this invocation. (The objection may be found in Vuletić's dissertation *Ways of Appearing*.) The Vuletić-Yoon objection is highly local and can be met in one of several ways within the old scheme. Vuletić himself develops in his dissertation a way of meeting the objection. Nonetheless, the objection prompted me to fundamentally rethink the idea of transparency. I now accept no version of transparency that dictates that images of any kind must be present in hallucinations. I allow that images *may* be present, but I reject the idea that they *must* be present in hallucinations. I thank Vuletić and Yoon for their important and stimulating objection.

Second, unlike disjunctivist theories, it treats all experiences (including illusions and hallucinations) in the same uniform way: each experience is directed to a presentational complex, and in each experience, the complex manifests an appearance. The account is, in this structural respect, similar to sense-datum theories and to representational theories. In these latter theories, too, all experiences are treated in the same uniform way—as acquaintance with sense-data or as a particular kind of representational state with a certain kind of content. Third, the account respects, nevertheless, one important point in the disjunctivist position: the idea that subjectively identical experiences need not be directed to *any* common elements. Sense-datum theories and representational theories stand opposed to disjunctivism on this point, but not the present account. The account allows that complexes to which subjectively identical experiences are directed may be thoroughly disjoint. Thus, it provides a middle way between disjunctivist and non-disjunctivist theories. Non-disjunctivist theories are right to insist that subjectively identical experiences share a common *factor*—namely, appearances. But disjunctivist theories are right to insist that such experiences need share no common *elements*.

42. The account of experience I am putting forward may be labeled ***Dual-Component Presentationalism***—in brief, ***Presentationalism***—for it sees each experience as consisting of two separable components, the presentational complex and the phenomenology. The overall position in the aid of which I am putting forward this account is an empiricism that avoids the excesses of its earlier incarnations, an empiricism that enables us to make sense of ordinary empirical reasoning and dialectic. My preferred name for the overall position is ***Reformed Empiricism***.

## VII. Application: Ostensive Definitions

43. An ***ostensive definition***, as I understand this concept, is a definition that relies on concurrent experiences to assign a meaning to the defined term. The account of experience sketched above, Presentationalism, makes available a natural treatment of one type of ostensive definition and of

one type of enrichment of our conceptual system with the aid of experience.<sup>37</sup> Suppose you are in your yard, looking at some insects, and you issue the ostensive definition

(7) Suzie =<sub>Df</sub> the red ant carrying a leaf.

This stipulation may well succeed in enriching your conceptual system with a name of a hitherto unnamed and unknown ant. And your visual experience may well play a vital role in enabling the enrichment. What might this role be?

One aspect of the role centers on the presentational complex of your experience. The presentational complex can enable the *definiens of* (7)—i.e., the right-hand side of (7), namely, ‘the red ant carrying a leaf’—to pick up a denotation. The definiens, if considered apart from your visual experience, may well fail to pick out any particular ant. Since leaf carrying is a rather common activity among red ants, the common-noun phrase ‘red ant carrying a leaf’ is probably true of many ants in our world and perhaps even of several ants in your immediate environment. However, given your visual experience, the definiens could well pick out a unique ant. The phrase ‘red ant carrying a leaf’ may well be true of only one ant making up the presentational complex of your experience. Your visual experience, through its presentational complex, can thus enable the definiens to possess a denotation when otherwise it would have lacked one. Your experience can in this way contribute to the interpretation of the ostensive definition and, thereby, of its *definiendum* (i.e., the left-hand side of (7)).

More generally, the definiens of an ostensive definition can be semantically evaluated at many different points of evaluation. The definiens can be evaluated at the world as a whole, and it can be evaluated at various portions of the world. The semantic value of the definiens—and, indeed, whether it has a semantic value—can vary from point of evaluation to point of evaluation. One way an experience can contribute to the interpretation of an ostensive definition is by providing a point of evaluation—namely, the presentational complex—for the definiens. This contribution can help pin a denotation on the definiendum.

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<sup>37</sup>There is a variety of ostensive definitions, and I am here restricting discussion to one of the simplest types.

44. The semantical contribution of experience can extend to the sub-expressions making up the definiens. Let  $e$  be the visual experience you underwent when you issued definition (7)—I shall call  $e$  *the grounding experience of* your issuance of (7). Now one way that the presentational complex,  $\Pi_e$ , of  $e$  can contribute to the interpretation of ‘Suzie’ is this. We consider the objects that *satisfy* the condition,

(8)  $x$  is a red ant &  $x$  is carrying a leaf,

at the world as a whole (call it ‘@’); these are the objects  $o$ , such that both ‘red ant’ and ‘carrying a leaf’ are *true of*  $o$ .<sup>38</sup> We then go on to determine which of these objects belong to  $\Pi_e$ . If a unique one belongs to  $\Pi_e$ , then that is the denotation of ‘Suzie’; if none or more than one belongs to  $\Pi_e$ , then ‘Suzie’ fails to denote. There is another way, however, in which  $\Pi_e$  can contribute to the interpretation of ‘Suzie’. We can consider the objects that satisfy condition (8) *at*  $\Pi_e$ . This may provide us with a unique ant that satisfies (8) even when the previous procedure fails to do so. Suppose you see two ants—say, Ant A and Ant B—carrying leaves and both ants are red but only the redness of Ant A is visible to you. That is, Ant A’s being red is a part of the presentational complex  $\Pi_e$ , but Ant B’s being red is not. Now, both ants satisfy the condition ‘ $x$  is a red ant’ at @, but only Ant A satisfies it at  $\Pi_e$ . Hence, only Ant A satisfies (8) at  $\Pi_e$ . The second way of interpreting the definiens yields, therefore, a denotation whereas the first way fails to do so.<sup>39</sup> The general point is that the presentational complex of an experience can contribute to the interpretation of an ostensive definition in several different semantical ways, including some subtle ones.

45. An ostensive definition may be *rational*, but may turn out to be *defective*. When you issued stipulation (7), your initial view may have been rational and, furthermore, the appearances manifested in your experience may have rendered the transition to (7) perfectly rational. Your issuance of the ostensive definition would, in these circumstances, certainly be rational.

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<sup>38</sup>I am suppressing the relativity to time.

<sup>39</sup>Formal semantical clauses can be formulated that spell out the two ways of assessing perceptual descriptions. To save time and space, I omit a formal treatment of the topic.

However, as you undergo further experiences, you may learn that the ant you thought was carrying a leaf was actually carrying a piece of paper—or, worse, you may learn that you were hallucinating when you issued (7). You may learn, that is, that the definiens of (7) denotes nothing, rendering the definition defective. With judgments, there is a familiar distinction between rationality and truth: a judgment may be rational but false, and equally, a judgment may be irrational but true. With ostensive definitions, there is a parallel distinction: an ostensive definition may be rational but defective, and equally, an ostensive definition may be irrational but non-defective.<sup>40</sup>

**46.** Notice that if an ostensive definition is defective, it does not follow that its definiendum is meaningless. We have just considered a situation in which your stipulation (7) is rational but one in which you later discover it to be defective. Because of the defect in the definition, the ostensively defined name ‘Suzie’ lacks a denotation; however, the name is not meaningless. Before you discovered the defectiveness of (7), you may have used ‘Suzie’ for various rational ends (e.g., to give directions to your assistant, “watch Suzie while I fetch a magnifying glass”). In these uses, ‘Suzie’ was not a meaningless noise; it was a meaningful element of your rational discourse. If meaningfulness is understood as possession of meaning, then meaning is not denotation; for lack of denotation does not imply lack of meaning. Rational use of a term depends only partly, and sometimes not at all, on denotation. It depends also on view and experience. These can render the use of a name meaningful even when the name denotes nothing. For example, in virtue of your view, the name ‘Suzie’ may possess a connotation (§32), which may underwrite rational uses of ‘Suzie’ in perceptual situation (e.g., in judging of a grasshopper that it is not Suzie). So, appearances can support rational use, even though a name denotes nothing.

**47.** Ostensive definitions can bring about a substantial enrichment of a conceptual system. An

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<sup>40</sup>With definitions one encounters in mathematics, there is no significant distinction between rationality and non-defectiveness. Such definitions are non-defective iff they meet certain minimal logical constraints. Since these constraints are easily verified, the definitions are non-defective iff they are rational.

experience can present a subject with items of a new kind, items she has never encountered before, and can thereby serve as a ground for the introduction of a substantially new concept. For example, the visual experience may present a subject with ants that belong to an altogether new subfamily, of whose existence the subject was totally unaware. Prior to the experience, the subject may have believed that there are twenty subfamilies of ants. Thanks to the new experience, she learns that there is an additional subfamily, and she enriches her conceptual system with a name for the new subfamily—perhaps through the ostensive definition:

(9) Ant-subfamily<sub>21</sub> =<sub>df</sub> the subfamily to which these ants belong.

**48. *Objection:*** “Definition (9) does not effect any substantial enrichment of the subject’s system of concepts. Even prior to the experience of the ants, definite descriptions would be available to the subject that pick out the new subfamily of ants—for example, the descriptions ‘the subfamily of ants that will be present in so-and-so visual experience at such-and-such time’ and ‘the subfamily of ants I will point to on such-and-such occasion’.”

*Reply:* If the subject already possesses a refined system of concepts that allows her to denote particular visual experiences, particular moments of time, and particular occasions then, certainly, prior to the experience, definite descriptions could well be available to the subject that denote the new subfamily of ants. However, let us observe, first, that the subject would not be entitled to think that there is such a subfamily of ants and could not rationally introduce a name for it. Second, the beauty of ostensive definition (9) is that it enables a subject to add the name ‘Ant-subfamily<sub>21</sub>’ even when the subject possesses meager conceptual resources—even when the subject lacks any means of denoting particular visual experiences, particular moments, and particular occasions. Third, even when (9) is deployed in the context of a rich initial system, the ostensive definition brings with it the advantage that the name ‘Ant-subfamily<sub>21</sub>’ is independent of the subject’s conception of experience, time, and occasion. These latter may be confused and may embody many misconceptions, thereby jeopardizing the denotational connection between the descriptions and the world. But the denotational connection established by (9) is not affected at all by any such confusions and misconceptions. Ostensive definitions enable the subject to introduce concepts with lighter presuppositions and with more resilient denotational

connections.<sup>41</sup>

**49.** The following is a possibility: The members of a primitive community, living a life filled with danger and hardship, begin with limited and crude concepts that help them in their daily struggle for survival—concepts such as “bitter-fruit,” “predator-animal,” and “prey-animal.” The community keeps no records; it possesses no calendar. Over time, the hunting and gathering skills of the community improve, and the hardship eases a little. The community members begin to explore their environment. They encounter new things, which they examine with increasing care and precision. The community members introduce new concepts through ostensive definitions, and they refine old ones as they learn more about the similarities and differences of things. (For example, “predator-animal” and “prey-animal” may give way to a complex hierarchy of zoological concepts of which no pair matches the two initial concepts.) We can imagine further that the community is able, in part because of the new experientially acquired concepts, to domesticate animals and to grow plants and, thereby, to gain more comfort and leisure for its members. The community, we can imagine, develops a script and begins to keep records. The community members now initiate a systematic study of the night sky. They enrich their vocabulary with ostensibly defined names for stars and constellations. They go on to refine their measures of time, to set up a calendar, and to engage in debates about their place in the larger scheme of things. Later still, they begin to reflect on the logic governing these debates.

It is possible, in short, for a meager conceptual system to evolve, under the influence of the rational force exerted by experience, into a rich and sophisticated one.

**50.** A comparison with representational theories of experience: Under the proposal I am making, experience provides a presentational complex, which can serve as a *point of evaluation* for the definiens of an ostensive definition—for example, for the perceptual description ‘the red ant carrying a leaf’ in definition (7). Experience, in virtue of the presentational complex, can

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<sup>41</sup>Ostensive definitions meet neither of the two requirements traditional logic imposes on definitions, Conservativeness and Eliminability. These requirements are appropriate for a narrow range of definitions, not for definitions in general. See my “Definitions” for a discussion of the two requirements.

help pin a denotation on the perceptual description and, thereby, on the definiendum. Under representational theories, in contrast, experience provides a *content*, something that is not suitable to be a point of evaluation. A content is an *object of evaluation*, something that can be assessed at a point of evaluation. It is not itself a point of evaluation and cannot serve as one. Consequently, under representational theories, the contribution of experience to the interpretation of (7) is something of a mystery, for the content of experience appears irrelevant to the interpretation of the definiens. Consider a parallel case. Suppose Smith thinks erroneously that Jefferson was the second President of the United States. This mental state is, plainly, irrelevant to the denotation of Smith's uses of the description 'the second President of the United States'. The denotation of the description is whatever individual uniquely satisfies the condition 'x is second in the ordered list of Presidents of the United States'. Smith's beliefs and thoughts are irrelevant as also are Smith's brain states with their possibly false non-conceptual contents. The denotation of a description depends on the actual world and, in contextual cases, on portions of the world. The denotation depends on which objects *satisfy* the relevant condition, not on which objects are *represented* as satisfying the condition. So, it is a mystery *how* and *why* possibly false experiential representations are relevant to the interpretation of a perceptual description such as 'the red ant carrying a leaf' and, more generally, of ostensive definitions.

**51.** A comparison with acquaintance theories of experience, whose account of ostensive definitions may be summed up thus:

(i) The fundamental ways of ostensively defining a term *t* are " $t =_{\text{Df}}$  this" and " $t =_{\text{Df}}$  that." The denotation of 'this' and 'that' in these *bare ostensive definitions*, as we may call them, are supplied by the grounding experience (together, I suppose, with the attentive but non-conceptual gaze of the experiencing subject). Since presentation, according to these theories, is to be equated with acquaintance, experience, on these theories, provides the subject with the ability to intend a particular presented item with a use of 'this' or 'that' and, thus, the ability to use a bare ostensive definition to semantically link the definiendum with this item. To illustrate: experience presents you with red; you are thereby acquainted with red; you are able to demonstratively denote red; you are able to pin the denotation red on the word 'red'; you are able to use the word 'red' meaningfully.

(ii) Ostensive definitions provide the subject with the most primitive empirical concepts. The range of these concepts varies from acquaintance theory to acquaintance theory. Naive Realist theories allow primitive empirical concepts to denote particular ordinary things; sense-datum theories, on the other hand, allow these concepts to denote particular sense-data but not ordinary things. Most acquaintance theories hold *sensory concepts* such as “red,” “hot,” and “sour” to be primitive.

(iii) The subject is acquainted with the denotations of primitive empirical concepts. Sensory concepts, in particular, denote *sensible qualities*, and the subject is acquainted with these qualities.<sup>42</sup>

(iv) The primitive empirical concepts form the fixed foundations of empirical cognition. They provide the basis on which the other empirical concepts are gained.

(v) Ostensive definitions enable a subject to gain concepts on a purely non-conceptual basis.

**52.** In contrast, on the view of experience put forward here, the following contrary ideas hold:

(i\*) Bare ostensive definitions are illegitimate. Since presentation is entirely distinct from acquaintance, experience, by itself, does not provide the subject with any knowledge of the presented items and, furthermore, does not enable the subject to demonstratively intend specific presented items.

(ii\*) Concepts defined ostensively have no special claim to be primitive. All ostensive definitions bring into play some concepts in their definientia, and relative to these concepts, the defined concepts are bound to be derivative. Sensory concepts, too, may be ostensively defined—for example, ‘yellow’ may be defined by issuing (10) under proper circumstances:

(10) Yellow =<sub>df</sub> that color quality.

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<sup>42</sup>On some readings, sensible qualities and our acquaintance with them acquire a mystical status. According to M. T. Thornton, some terms require ostensive definition—Thornton gives “red” and “pain” as examples—and, furthermore, this very fact renders the terms verbally indefinable. See Thornton’s “Ostensive Terms and Materialism.”

However, this definition renders “yellow” less primitive than “color.”<sup>43</sup>

(iii\*) The subject may well be quite ignorant of the items denoted by ostensibly defined terms. Definition (10) may well pick out a quality of things, and yet the subject may have little understanding of this quality. The subject may need to engage in an extended empirical inquiry to come to know this quality.

(iv\*) Ostensive definitions do not provide fixed, foundational empirical concepts; ostensibly defined concepts are revisable (§45). Empirical cognition needs, I believe, no foundational empirical concepts. We can make sense of the role of experience in cognition and, in particular, of the conceptual enrichment experience makes possible, without positing any foundational empirical concepts.

(v\*) Like all definitions, ostensive definitions need some concepts to be in play in their definienda. Ostensive definitions can enable, we have seen, a transition from one system of concepts to a richer system of concepts. These definitions do not enable, however, a transition from an absence of concepts to the presence of concepts. Ostensive definitions *presuppose* conceptual capacities; they are not the source of these capacities. Ostensive definitions are not devices for converting, for example, animal knowledge of things into discursive knowledge of things, let alone convert it into the foundations of discursive knowledge.

## VIII. Application: Color

**53.** The account of experience offered here, Presentationalism, provides the freedom theoretical reason needs to answer questions such as “what is color?” Let us begin with an ur-conception of color, a conception that is natural to accept prior to any large-scale systematic investigation into

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<sup>43</sup>One may be able to define names of particular colors without invoking the general concept ‘color’. For example, if one experiences a disk change its color to a particular shade of red, one may introduce a name for this shade through the ostensive definition:

Red<sub>27</sub> =<sub>Df</sub> the quality this disk possesses now but did not possess a moment ago.

One has dispensed with the concept “color” here but only at the cost of bringing into play other concepts.

the nature of color.

**Ur-Conception of Color.** Ordinary things (e.g., bananas) instantiate color qualities. These qualities reflect a dimension of similarities among things: a thing that is green, for example, possesses the color quality green and is similar to other green things along one particular dimension. In the presence of light, colored things act on, or interact with, our eyes and the rest of our perceptual system, giving rise to color experiences. Sometimes the color of the perceived thing is seen; it is present to consciousness. Sometimes, however, the color of the perceived thing is not seen, and it is not present to consciousness. Color experiences are good, though not infallible, guides to the colors of things. They enable us to know the colors of things and to obtain useful knowledge about colored things (e.g., that yellowness in bananas indicates ripeness).

The Ur-Conception leaves many important details unspecified—for example, it leaves unspecified the role of light and of the eye in the interactions that give rise to color experiences. Empirical investigation can be expected to fill in the details missing from the Ur-Conception. The Ur-Conception, sketchy though it is, commits itself to some substantive claims about color. Empirical investigation *cannot* be expected to leave these claims undisturbed; it may well force additions to and subtractions from these claims.

**54.** Consider a possible course of the evolution of the Ur-Conception as a community of thinkers undertakes a rational empirical inquiry into color and the perception of it. The conception may successively be revised, we can imagine, to the following three views:

**Primitivism.** Colors are qualities and, furthermore, they are *primitive* qualities. For example, green things—including, grass and green lights and the surfaces of certain bananas—all possess the primitive color quality green and are, in virtue of this possession, similar to one another in one particular dimension. Furthermore, color qualities are a part of the causal order, and they influence our visual system. More specifically, the presence of light renders the intervening medium between the eye and

the perceived object transparent and thus enables the color of the perceived object to reach the eye and thence the perceiving organ, namely, the heart. Sometimes when the conditions are abnormal (e.g., when the intervening medium is not quite transparent or the eye is diseased), the color reaching the heart is not purely the color of the perceived object but a mixture of colors; thus arise color illusions. When a blue thing looks green, the blueness of the perceived thing is not present in the perceiving organ, nor to the perceiving consciousness. Nonetheless, an instance of green is present in the perceiving organ and to the perceiving consciousness.

It is important not to take a condescending attitude toward this view. If we now understand better light and color and the heart, it is not because we can dismiss Primitivism *a priori*. It is because rational empirical investigations have provided us with reasons to move away from the conceptions of light, color, and the heart contained in this view. Aristotle, whose contributions to the study of nature remain unsurpassed, gave empirical reasons for thinking (e.g.) that the heart is the principal organ of perception. He considered a contrary idea, favored by Alcmaeon and Plato, that the principal organ of perception is the brain but rejected it on empirical grounds.<sup>44</sup>

**55.** Primitivism preserves the picture of color in the Ur-Conception and adds new details. The next view changes the picture substantially.

**Reductionism.** Colors are qualities of things, but they are not *primitive* qualities; they do not define an independent dimension of similarity and difference among things. Green things, for example, all possess a certain feature—a feature that is specifiable in terms of shape, structure, and hardness of their constituent parts. It is in virtue of this feature that green things are similar to one another and count as green. Furthermore, this feature is a part of the causal order. It influences, in particular, the behavior of the stream of corpuscles that is light. It ensures that only certain kinds of corpuscles are reflected or

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<sup>44</sup>I am not attributing Primitivism to Aristotle, though it incorporates some Aristotelian ideas.

emitted by a green thing. The corpuscles of light reaching the eye initiate a process that results in the experience of color. The color quality of a thing—the feature of the thing which is its color—is never actually seen; it is never present to consciousness in experience. Still color experiences are a fairly good guide to the presence of color qualities in things, and many of our ordinary color judgments, such as that yellowness in bananas indicates ripeness, are true.<sup>45</sup>

**56.** The third, and final, view is a radical departure from the Ur-Conception.

**Irrealism.** There are no color qualities; colors are not features of any thing at all. Green things, for example, share no single feature; they are similar in no one dimension. The interaction between light and things is highly complex and can vary from situation to situation. Dissimilar things can reflect or emit light of the same sort, and similar things can reflect or emit light of quite different sorts. Furthermore, the relationship of color experiences to light reaching the eye is highly complex. Color experiences are sometimes quite different even though the light reaching the eye is similar. And the other way around: light can be quite different but the color experiences the same. There are no color qualities or features; hence, none is ever presented in experience.<sup>46</sup>

**57.** The question “what is the nature of color?” is an empirical one. The question was debated in ancient times and is still debated today, and the debates have been—or, at least, should have

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<sup>45</sup>This view builds in some Lockean ideas about color.

<sup>46</sup>Irrealism is perhaps a descendent of the view of Democritus, who says in one of the surviving fragments, “by convention are sweet and bitter, hot and cold, by convention is color; in truth are atoms and the void.” According to C. L. Hardin (“A Spectral Reflectance Doth Not A Color Make”), most vision scientists reject realism about color qualities.

For contemporary versions of the above views, see the essays in Alex Byrne and David R. Hilbert’s anthology *Readings on Color I*. For a short introduction to the current debate and for references, see Barry Maund, “Color.” Mazviita Chirimuuta’s recent book *Outside Color* provides a historical introduction to the debate and offers an original view.

I do not wish to suggest that the three views sketched above are the only possible developments of the Ur-Conception.

been—primarily empirical. The existence and nature of color qualities cannot be settled *a priori* by an appeal to broadly logical considerations. It can be settled only by a close empirical study of light, the perceptual systems of animals, and the physics of things. Many conceptions of experience and meaning, however, find it difficult to sustain this simple truth. If the phenomenology of color experiences is constituted by the presence of color qualities then any irrealist view of color can be rejected prior to any empirical inquiry, for the view entails a denial of color phenomenology.<sup>47</sup> If the meaning of a color term (e.g., ‘yellow’) is fixed ostensively and if ostensive definition requires acquaintance, then any denial of the presence of color qualities in experience (e.g., as in Reductionism) entails a denial that color terms are legitimate and meaningful—a thoroughly absurd result.

**58.** Traditionally, the absurdities have been avoided by bifurcating nature. Reductionism and Irrealism have been reformulated, somewhat along these lines:

*Dualism.* There is a realm of mental items—impressions, sense-data, or sensings—that are present to consciousness in experience and that instantiate color qualities. These color qualities—call them *mental color qualities*—are distinct from the *physical color qualities*, if any, that are instantiated in ordinary objects. Reductionism and Irrealism, as formulated above, are strictly speaking false, for they neglect colored mental items. The cores of their views can be preserved, however, through a reformulation. The claims these views make about color qualities pertain to *physical* color qualities. For example, according to Reductionism, physical color qualities are reducible to features specifiable in terms of shape, structure, and hardness. This is perfectly coherent, as is the Irrealist claim that physical color qualities do not exist. The nature and even the existence of physical color qualities is a question for empirical inquiry to settle. Emphatically not so,

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<sup>47</sup>Terminology: ‘Irrealism’ denotes the specific view introduced above, and its lower-case counterpart (‘irrealism’) denotes the general conceptions of color contained in Irrealism. Irrealism (with capital ‘I’) includes details, such as about light, that are excluded from irrealism. Similarly for ‘Primitivism’ and ‘Reductionism’ and their lower-case counterparts.

however, for mental color qualities.<sup>48</sup> Their existence is an Archimedean fixed-point of empirical inquiry. The existence of these qualities (as well as other mental sensible qualities) is essential if empirical inquiry is to have a proper foundation. It is these qualities that are needed for (e.g.) ostensive definitions of color terms. The basic color terms denote mental color qualities. Ordinary color terms are defined in terms of the basic color terms, roughly along these lines:

Yellow =<sub>df</sub> the quality in physical things that causes the presence of yellow mental items under standard conditions.

**59.** It is a virtue of Presentationalism that it imposes no bifurcation on nature. Presentationalism creates logical space broad enough to accommodate all three views about color—Primitivist, Reductionist, and Irrealist—without requiring any reformulation. Presentationalism is able to do so because it incorporates two ideas. First, it recognizes a distinction between presentation and acquaintance. An object or a quality may be presented in experience to a subject, yet the subject may possess no knowledge of the object or the quality. Presentationalism, through the hypothetical given, accords experience a central role in cognition, but it does not see this role as that of supplying immediate knowledge of presented items. Consequently, according to Presentationalism, subjects can rationally take the nature of color qualities to be an open empirical question, even when color qualities are presented to them in their experiences. Rational subjects can deny that colors are genuine qualities, even though color qualities are presented in their experiences. The denial would not be in conflict with any knowledge of color supplied to them by their color experiences. Similarly, rational subjects can accept that color qualities are sometimes presented to them in their experience even though, as a matter of fact, there are no color qualities. The misconception would not render their color terms meaningless. Such subjects may introduce a name for a color through an ostensive definition such as

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<sup>48</sup>On some versions of the view, we are acquainted with mental color qualities, and our experience provides us with a perfect knowledge of them. See Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, p. 47.

Yellow =<sub>Df</sub> the color quality instantiated in this chip.

The subjects' definition would be defective, for it would not pin a denotation on 'yellow'. Still, the subjects' introduction of the definition could well be rational, and 'yellow' may, in the subjects' use, be a perfectly meaningful term. In the context provided by the subjects' views, the ostensive definition may well fix the meaning and use of 'yellow' (§§45 & 46). The subjects' misconception does not render the ostensive definition ineffective.<sup>49</sup>

Second, Presentationalism recognizes a distinction between appearances and qualities. As indicated above, there are two entirely separate sets of dimensions of similarities and differences. One set of dimensions pertains to things; the other pertains to the presentations of things. Qualities correspond to the first set of dimensions; appearances, to the second. As the factors affecting presentation are so different from factors affecting things, there is no *a priori* reason to expect any isomorphism between qualities and appearances, let alone to expect an identity between them. A denial of color qualities entails no denial of color appearances. Hence, there is logical space for a primitivist, a reductionist, and an irrealist to conduct an empirical debate over the nature of color without fear that the issue is settled by the obvious facts about color phenomenology.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Despite the misconception, 'yellow' may possess an extension in the subjects' use of the name, and furthermore, most of the subjects' attributions of 'yellow' to particular objects (e.g., to some bananas) may well be true. Even their general judgments (e.g., "yellowness in bananas indicates ripeness") may be true if shorn of their misleading implication that yellowness is a quality of things. The correct content of the general judgment about the ripeness of bananas may be formulated thus: yellow bananas tend to be ripe.

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