

# Introspection despite transparency

Benj Hellie

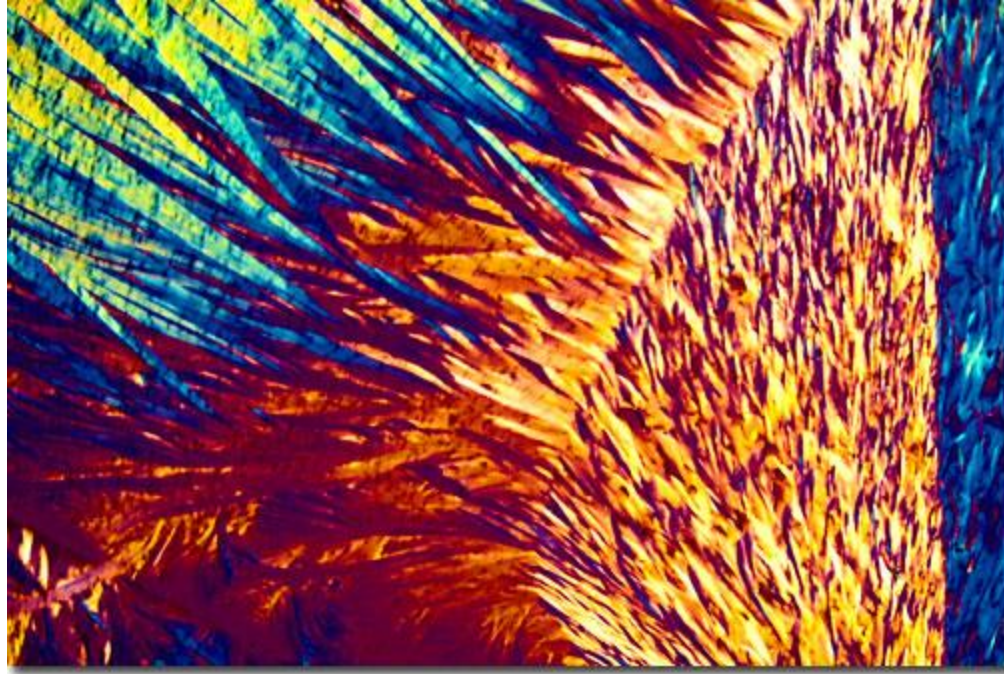
LOGOS Colloquium

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# Plan

## Introductory material

1. Transparency as I will understand it
2. Introspection by the Kant-inference
3. Introspection by alienated judgement
4. Concluding morals



# INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

# Theories of experience

- What do conscious experiences have in common?
  - They're all *conscious*, of course, but can anything more substantive be said?
- What is it that distinguishes conscious experiences from each other?
  - Beyond their time, place, and subject, there are distinctions in consciousness *as such*
- Answers would guide us toward the *natures* of experiential properties, varieties of consciousness as such
  - Analogous questions about chemical elements, number systems, biological taxa, ...

# Visual experience

- The focus of much of the work in this area
  - Sturgeon 'Visual experience'; Chalmers 'The representational character of experience' and 'Perception and the fall from eden'; MGF Martin 'The limits of self-awareness'; Byrne 'Experience and content'; my 'Factive phenomenal characters' and 'An externalist's guide to inner experience'
- Not so obvious what the subject-matter is here:
  - Some visual experiences:
    - Watching, looking, looking for, looking around
    - Visually: observing, scrutinizing; noticing, spotting
  - Is seeing an experience?
    - I'm inclined to think not

# Some hypotheses about perceptual consciousness

- Among the properties characteristic of consciousness as such are ...
  - Intrinsic qualities (qualia theory)
  - Intentional properties (representationalism)
  - Relations to the local environment (relationism)
- These answers aren't (obviously) exclusive

# Phenomenality

- An important notion: for some, the subject-matter in the area
- These subjects are the same “phenomenally”:
  - June sees a red card (things are normal)
  - Ilya sees a white card under a red spotlight
  - Inez sees a green card (but her brain is wired up opposite to June’s)
  - Raul is having a dream of seeing a red card
- What do they have in common?
  - In respect of which they differ from Greg who sees a green card

# Theories of consciousness on phenomenality

- What then do our paradigms have in common?
  - Qualia theory: common intrinsic qualities
  - Representationalism: common intentional properties
    - Difficulty: Inez represents green
    - Response: narrow “Fregean” content a la Chalmers and Brad Thompson
  - Relationism: story by itself doesn’t give us much in common; crafting a notion of phenomenality is a challenge



# Full disclosure

- I'm a fan of relationism
  - Accords best with ordinary conception of experience in general
- Giving an account of phenomenality is an undischarged obligation: our side needs “an externalist's guide to inner experience”, as it were
- The stuff in this talk explains the phenomenological and epistemological facts at the basis of such a story
- Today avoiding the later chapters in the story
  - Metaphysics, eg how once we've fixed the basis, facts about *how consciousness is* follow
  - Interpretational nuances, what these or those people do or should mean by 'phenomenality'
  - Pragmatic issues, whether the notion of phenomenality is good or helpful in the study of consciousness

# Some morals I will draw

- The “transparency of experience” is compatible with ...
  1. ... introspective knowledge of intrinsic qualities of experience, and (probably) with theories involving intrinsic (or extrinsic, or both) aspects to consciousness
  2. ... these intrinsic qualities of experience being of whatever category you like (qualia, relations to sense-data, and/or intentional properties)
  3. ... veridical spectral inversion
    - Shoemaker '91 gave the best theory here; no need for exotic representational properties or a return to Eden.
- Appearance otherwise may result from conflation of two styles of introspection

# A wrench thrown in philosophy of consciousness

- Transparency has been used to ...
  - Attack qualia
  - Attack sense-data
  - Defend representationalism ...
    - ... and its Russellian variant
    - ... and its edenic variant
    - ... and each of Shoemaker's half-dozen views since 1991
    - ... and a relativist variant
  - Defend relationism
- But none of these arguments goes anywhere.
- Where to, then?



# **1. TRANSPARENCY AS I WILL UNDERSTAND IT**

# Gilbert Harman 1990

## ‘The intrinsic quality of experience’

When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she experience any features of anything as intrinsic features of her experience. And that is true of you too. ... When you see a tree, you do not experience any features as intrinsic features of your experience. Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree

# Michael Tye 1992

## ‘Visual qualia and visual content’

Standing on the beach in Santa Barbara a couple of summers ago on a bright sunny day, I found myself transfixed by the intense blue of the Pacific Ocean. ... [W]hat I found so pleasing in the above instance, what I was focusing on, as it were, were a certain shade and intensity of the colour blue. I experienced blue as a property of the ocean not as a property of my experience. ... When one tries to focus on [the sensation of blue] in introspection one cannot help but see right through it so that what one actually ends up attending to is the real colour blue.

# GE Moore 1903

## ‘The refutation of idealism’???

- Famously:

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.

That which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent -- we look through it and see nothing but the blue.

- He’s not talking about the same thing

- My ‘That which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact’

# Transparency

- As far as your visual experience is concerned ...
  - You can't "turn attention" to such "internalia" as (perhaps) sense-data, your brain, your experience itself, their (intrinsic) conditions, facts concerning these, and so on
  - If you can "turn attention" to anything at all it is to such "externalia" as trees, oceans, their (non-response-dependent) conditions, facts concerning these, and so on
- A series of remarks on formulating this idea ...



# Remark: visual distortions

- Double vision, floaters, visual noise, blur, and the like pose extraordinary difficulties of formulation for this thesis;
- Perhaps they “degrade” seeing;
- At any rate we will set these aside

# Remark: “turn attention”, 1

- A form of preconceptual awareness of x on the basis of which “phenomenally basic” concepts referring to x can be formed (a *symptom* of attention)
- *Phenomenal basicness*---the thought here is that the act of conceptualizing “feels simple” (more needs to be said here obviously)
- Example, it’s phenomenally basic to conceptualize a color which is an object of attention as ‘that color’
- A (time-slice of a) guy who believes in attention to intrinsic qualities of experience:

The clearest cases of direct phenomenal concepts arise when a subject attends to the quality of an experience, and forms a concept **wholly** based on the attention to the quality, “taking up” the quality into the concept (Chalmers 2003)

# Remark: “turn attention”, 2

- Sometimes people water down the notion of attention by allowing it to take mere intentional objects or mere uninstantiated universals
- Not me, I come armed with a robust sense of reality
- Attention is a relation to real concreta and/or their property-instances.
  - Foreshadowing, in hallucination there’s nothing to attend to, it just seems that there is

# (Remark: “turn attention”, 3)

- I’m not sure I believe this anymore
- Chris Mole converted me to the “adverbial theory of attention”
  - » Attention Is Cognitive Unison, OUP forthcoming
- Fundamental form of attention fact: *Aing attentively*
- The action one does when one turns attention is *attentively visually scrutinizing*

# Let's get propositional

- For various reasons it will be helpful to recast the *objectual* notion of *attention* in *factive* terms
- Assume (not especially controversially) that visual experience sometimes *makes evidence available*
  - This is compatible with your being unable to appreciate or grasp some of that evidence in judgement
- Providing evidence and grounding attention are pretty similar
  - Attention requires an (existing) object, bits of evidence are (true) facts
    - Once again, in hallucination, no factive attention (tho might seem to attend a certain fact)
  - Conferring ability to *attend* to *o* is a bit like a “confrontation” with *o*; making *F* available is a bit like a “confrontation” with *F*

# Transparency in my sense

- **If visual experience makes fact F available as evidence, and F can be appreciated using only phenomenally basic concepts, F (exclusively) concerns externalia**
  - » “Concerns externalia” is supposed to rule out response-dependent properties like *causing this R sense-datum in me* but include egocentric location properties like *being five feet from here*

# A constraint on theories of introspection

- Consequence of transparency:
  - If one comes introspectively to know  $F$ , where  $F$  concerns one's visual experience, then one does not appreciate  $F$  using only phenomenally basic concepts
- So a theory of introspective knowledge will be secure against the charge that it has violated transparency only if its judgements are not appreciated in a phenomenally basic manner
- Chalmers 2003 is open to this charge
  - But if you're familiar with Chalmers's paper you may notice that my theory is a sort of superstructure built around the theory there

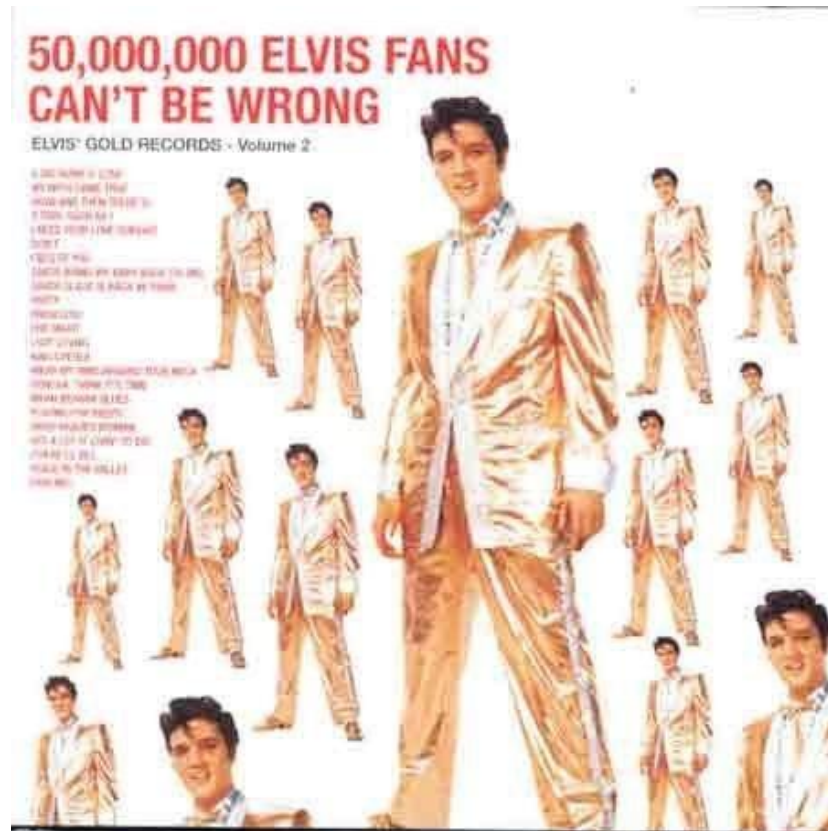
# Phenomenal basicness: paradigm

- “Phenomenal basicness” is, I grant, elusive. A paradigm will help:
- Suppose ...
  - June sees a red thing; so
  - June’s visual experience provides the evidence that something is red; and
  - June judges ‘something is *that color* [red]’.
- June’s judgement will be our paradigm of phenomenally basic appreciation of evidence provided by visual experience.



# Phenomenal basicness: foil

- By contrast, the requirement of phenomenal basicness rules out introspective procedures which involve June's judgement as ...
  - ... an inferential basis; or
  - ... a basis for forming other judgements by logical operations at the level of either syntax or conceptual synthesis.
- Our two styles of introspection will involve June's judgement in these ways, respectively



## 2. INTROSPECTION BY THE KANT-INFERENCE

# The Kant-inference

- People sometimes suggest that the following “Kant-inference” is valid (“attaching the ‘I think’ to a representation”):  
**Something is *that color* |--**  
**I see something *that color***
  - If so, then if June makes this inference, she comes to know something about her visual experience
  - And does so without violating transparency
- Let’s see why it is valid

# Fregean color concepts

- The *referent* of June's concept 'this color [red]' is *redness*, a purely external property (let's suppose)
- But maybe it has a *sense* distinct from this referent
- My favorite candidate such sense:
  - **The color which (typically and now) causes me to go R by being seen**
- Think of this sense as a higher-order indexical property assigned to the concept in virtue of its use: explicitly *not* as an explicitly grasped description

# What about this R?

- **The color which (typically and now) causes me to go R by being seen**
- R is an intrinsic property of June which red typically causes her to instantiate by being seen
- Assume: 'this color [red]' is available iff one is R
- That's all we need to say about R!

# (Why all the finicky bits?)

- **The color which (typically and now) causes me to go R by being seen**
  - » The “now” clause stems from the commitment of color demonstratives to current presence of the color;
  - » The “typically” clause stems from the commitment to the objectivity of their referent;
  - » In case of hallucination or illusion reference failure (or might be “second-best” reference);
  - » The “R-causation” clause stems from the commitment to some subjective reaction as closely connected to colors;
  - » The sole concern with “me” stems from the compatibility of our color demonstratives with spectral inversion.

# Back to validating the Kant-inference

- Something is *that color* | -- I see something *that color*
- That's valid in the sense that the sense of the premiss can't be satisfied when the sense of the conclusion isn't:
- P and C are quite clearly "1-true" at just the same centered worlds: 1-truth condition of ...
  - (P) Something has the color which (typically and **now**) causes me to go R by being seen
  - (C) I see something with the color which (typically and now) causes me to go R by being seen



### 3. INTROSPECTION BY ALIENATED JUDGEMENT



# Extrinsic and intrinsic qualities of experience

- The Kant-inference brings knowledge of the extrinsic qualities of visual experience (*seeing something red*)
- But brings no knowledge of any intrinsic qualities
- When an experience has no extrinsic qualities, the Kant-inference will be powerless
- So how are we to explain knowledge of hallucination?

# Hallucination

- Suppose that Raul hallucinates, having an experience introspectively indiscriminable from June's
- The Kant-inference can't explain Raul's introspective knowledge, since both P and C are false
  - » So maybe there is no introspective knowledge of hallucination? (Soteriou) But ...
    - We can introspectively discriminate an experience of hallucinating red and of hallucinating green;
    - And if I learned I had no introspective idea whatsoever how the former was, I would abandon my judgement that it is distinct from the latter

# Another route to introspective knowledge

- My proposal: Raul acquires knowledge of his experience not by valid inference from knowledge of externalia but by incorrigible judgement
  - » A bit like Chalmers's strategy but without the "attending to take up the phenomenal property into the concept" stuff: sadly mere incorrigibility leaves normativity out. Chalmers appeals to "acquaintance" to bring it back; not sure whether I can use that
- We will construct a phenomenally complex judgement about his experience that can't be false
  - In line with tantalizing remarks about "oblique reflection" (Loar) and "reconceptualizing what you were aware of all along" (Shoemaker)

# Strategy for constructing this

- Strategy: construct a judgement with the truth-condition that one is R
  - Recall that June's concept 'that color [red]' is available iff one is R, where that's an intrinsic property
  - Raul can plausibly deploy that concept, so he is R; he just needs to be able to judge that he is
    - Here I'm individuating concepts not by sense but psychologically
- We'll do this by sequentially fixing two problems for Raul's use of C

# Initial problem with Raul's C

## C. I see something with *that color* [red]

- For Raul, this is not true, since he does not see anything
- Remedy for this is easy: remember Smart 1959  
“Something is going on in me like what is going on when ...”: call prefixing this *smartening*
- Raul's smartened C:
  - I am in that intrinsic condition which I am typically in when I see something *that color* [red]

# Remaining problem with Raul's smartened C

- Raul's smartened C:
  - I am in that intrinsic condition which I am typically in when I see something *that color* [red]
- This has no truth-value since Raul's 'that color [red]' does not refer: after all, he's hallucinating
  - » More precisely, no property satisfies the condition of being the typical and current cause of Raul's being R
  - (Smart didn't have this problem because he took 'orange' for granted, but that concept is dissociable from the intrinsic character of your experience, so no guarantee of incorrigibility)

# A referent for Raul

- The sense of ‘that color [red]’ is **the color which (typically and now) causes me to go R by being seen**
- Raul’s deployment has no referent since no color *now* causes him to go R by being seen
- Want to build a concept without this clause ...
- ... but which you still must be R to deploy ...
- ... and which is clearly not phenomenally basic.

# Objectivizing, 1

- Plausibly, I can synthesize a concept of redness which is tied to my *tendency* toward subjective response in the manner of 'that color [red]' but without also being tied to my *occurrent* subjective response.
- Such a concept would be a step toward a more objective understanding of redness than the understanding embedded in 'that color [red]'
- It would reflect an understanding that something currently unseen by me has a property which will result in a certain subjective response later



# Objectivizing, 2

- Suppose then that I perform this objectivizing synthesis on the basis of an occurrent token of 'that color [red]';
- Symbolize the resulting concept as 'O(that color [red])'.
- The greater objectivity of this concept results in a less stringent sense than 'that color [red]', namely:
  - **The color which (typically) causes me to go R by being seen** (even if it's not doing it right now)

# Objectivizing, 3

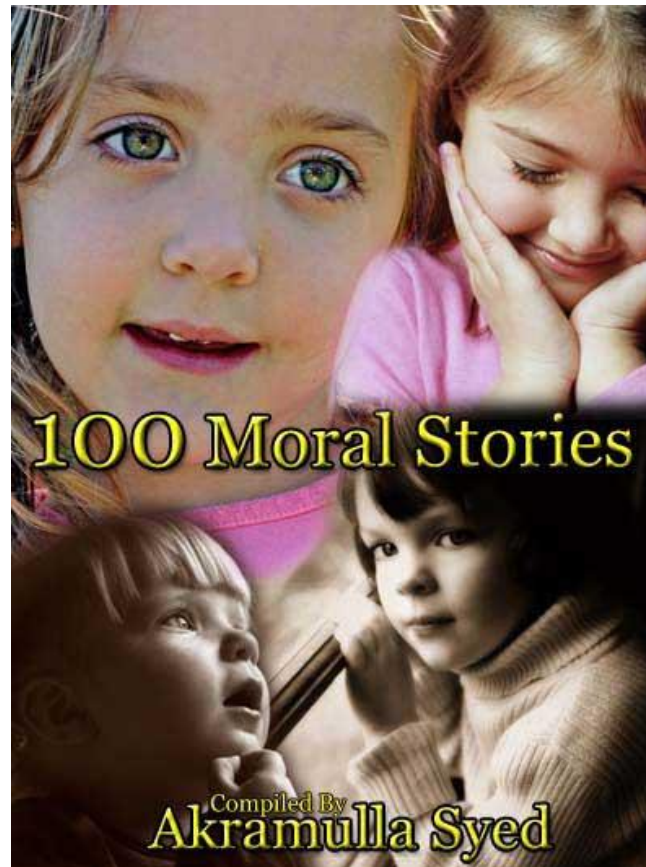
- Note that the relationship of ‘O(that color [red])’ to ‘that color [red]’ is not a *semantic* relationship:
  - It does not inherit part of its meaning compositionally from ‘that color [red]’;
  - Otherwise, Raul’s ‘O(that color [red])’ would be, like the embedded concept, without a referent.
- Rather, the relationship is *pedagogical*:
- My *grasp* of the O-concept rests, in the moment, on my grasp of the embedded concept.

# On becoming alienated

- An *alienated* judgement results from smartening and objectivizing June's original judgement 'I see something that color [red]':
  - I am in that intrinsic condition which I am typically in when I see something **O(*that color* [red])**
- The sense of this alienated judgement is:
  - I am in that intrinsic condition which I am typically in when I see something with the color which (typically) causes me to go **R by being seen**
- Which is clearly equivalent to :
  - I am R
    - » (Conjoined with the claim that some color regularly causes R; if I'm a brain in a vat or in a chaos world, reference fail; but maybe secondary referent is R)

# Incorrigible alienation

- Since the alienated judgement embeds (pedagogically) ‘that color [red]’, it too is available only when one is R;
- Accordingly, the judgement is incorrigible;
- Modulo normativity, the alienated judgement is a case of *knowledge*.
  - » Moreover, it enables discrimination of hallucinating red and hallucinating green;
  - » And doesn’t enable an epistemic basis for discriminating hallucinating red from seeing red since any knowledge about the former is available about the latter



## 4. CONCLUDING MORALS

# First moral

- Transparency is compatible with introspective knowledge of intrinsic qualities of experience ... :
  - Plausibly alienated judgements count as “introspective”;
  - R is, we are assuming, an intrinsic quality of experience;
  - So alienated judgements bring introspective knowledge of intrinsic qualities of experience;
  - And the phenomenal complexity of the judgement required for Raul’s knowledge doesn’t violate our necessary condition for transparency.
- ... and (probably) with theories involving intrinsic (or extrinsic, or both) aspects to consciousness:
  - Depending on what line we take on the consciousness-introspection link;
  - Not taking a stance here, I’m avoiding metaphysics.

# Second moral

- Transparency is compatible with these intrinsic qualities of experience being qualia, relations to sense-data, and/or intentional properties:
  - All that is required of R in this story is given by its ability to serve in the modes of presentation of colors, and nothing there seems to take a stand on these metaphysical debates

# Third moral

- Transparency is compatible with veridical spectral inversion
  - Even without agonizing over the nature of R;
  - After all, we assumed that June is a nonvert, but the story would go through unchanged if she were an invert
- Shoemaker's story in 1991 involves a "reconceptualization of what one was aware of all along [that] produce[s] explicit awareness of qualia as such" without the agonies to which he would later subject himself
- Sounds right to me!



# Why have these points been elusive?

- Conflation of the two methods of introspection:
  - Introspecting by Kant-inference, we think we find external aspects to experience;
  - Introspecting by alienated judgement, we think we find internal aspects;
  - But the logical structure of our concepts is slightly opaque, so:
  - Taking ourselves to have done some unified thing and thereby accessed a unified domain, we search for theories that eliminate one or the other side (standard qualia theory, standard direct realism), or attempt to bundle them together (standard intentionalism).
- Or perhaps ...
  - Because the model makes our conceptions of experience much more opaque than they seem to be; because at the same time it seems to rely on some underlying mysterious capacity to use experiences in concepts despite our indirect cognitive relation to them; and because (like most transparency models of introspection) it doesn't have a good story about justification, or at least not one that can plausibly vindicate the apparent internalist security of our introspective judgments? (So sayeth Chalmers)

Krautrock/electronica concert

Cluster + Au

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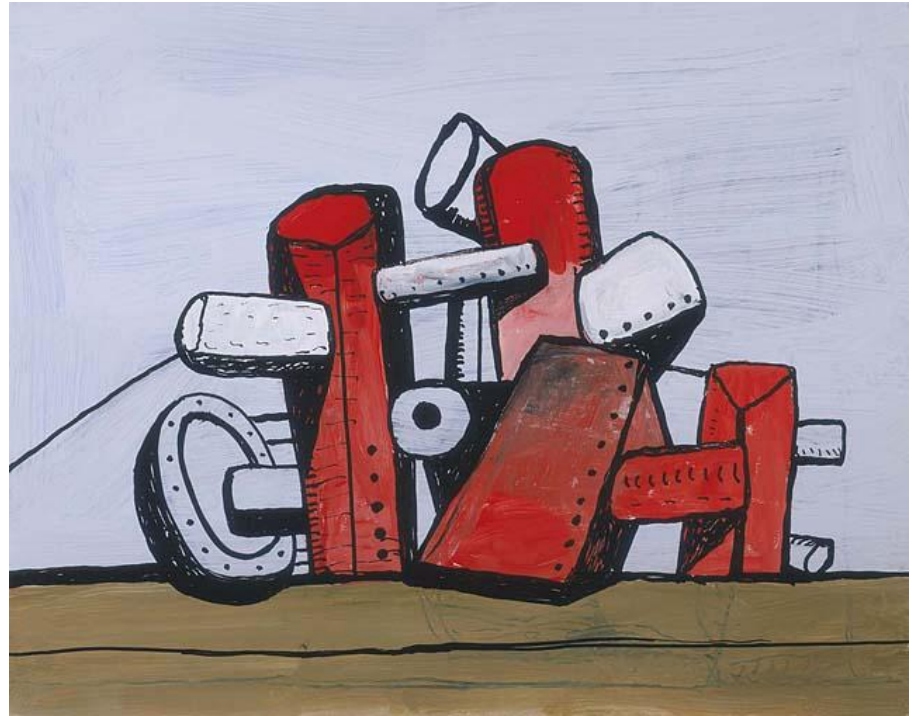
Thursday, 11 June

19h

E 3,60

Tomorrow night

Be there or be square!



# ADVERTISEMENT