

Beyond Phenomenal Naivete

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I can see my own body ‘indirectly’,
sc. in the mirror.
—Austin 1962, 31

On a natural description of what a mundane visual experience is like for its subject—of its *phenomenal character*, of how it is *phenomenally*—such an experience is phenomenally a direct or immediate awareness of entities in the scene before the subject’s eyes. For example, according to Strawson (1979, 97), “mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as [. . .] an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of things outside of us”; according to Sturgeon (2000, 9), “Visual phenomenology makes it for a subject as if a scene is simply presented. Veridical perception, illusion and hallucination seem to place objects and their features directly before the mind”. According to many,¹ that experience *is* an immediate consciousness² of things outside of us is part of a *naive* view of experience: I therefore call the doctrine that an experience is, *phenomenally*, an immediate awareness of entities external to the subject *Phenomenal Naivete*.

Unfortunately, Phenomenal Naivete is incompatible with a natural suggestion as to the connection between the phenomenal character of a visual experience and the experience’s nature: while armchair philosophical reasoning or experimental psychology might play a crucial role in producing a theory of the nature of visual experience, this role would be limited to filling in the contours drawn by the phenomenal character of experience; while the phenomenal character of an experience might leave crucial gaps as to its nature, there is no way that phenomenal character could mislead; if an experience has a certain feature phenomenally—if that feature is among its phenomenal characters—it has that feature in fact.³

¹ Arguably, an early appearance of this suggestion occurs in Hume’s “Skepticism Regarding the Senses” (Hume, 1739/1978, I/IV/II); see also Russell 1912, ch. I and Price 1950, ch. II. Prominent recent discussions are due to Valberg (1992), Snowdon (1992), Martin (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005), Smith (2002), and Crane (2005).

² I follow Snowdon 1992 in rejecting the view that the notion of immediacy gets no toehold in common sense; thus it is open for philosophical interpretation.

My preferred interpretation is in line with a tradition including Jackson 1977, ch. 1 and Foster 1985, 159: from the perspective of this tradition (and, perhaps, against Snowdon), the distinction between mediacy and immediacy is highly generally applicable, having to do with *constitution* or lack thereof. A bit more specifically, for an experience to be a certain way (such as of o) mediately is for its being that way to be constituted by its being some other way in a contextually salient class of ways; for its being that way immediately is for its being that way not to be so constituted.

In my view, the most fruitful way to understand the notion as used in the literature is this: to say that e is an immediate consciousness of o is to say that in e, e’s subject stands in a *prime* relation of awareness to or consciousness of o, where a prime relation is a psychological relation between s and o which does not decompose into a psychological intrinsic property of s and a nonpsychological relation between s and o (compare Williamson, 2000, ch. 3); a psychological relation which decomposes into a psychological intrinsic property of s and a nonpsychological relation between s and o is *composite*. Regrettably, space prohibits doing more to defend this interpretation than gesturing to Jackson’s discussion and hoping the reader will see the virtues of my approach over his.

The conflict arises because a hallucinatory visual experience in which one is entirely unaware of the scene before one's eyes would not in fact be an immediate awareness of external entities, though Phenomenal Naivete might still be true of it: after all, Phenomenal Naivete is very attractive as applied to ordinary veridical experience, and surely for any possible veridical experience, there is a possible hallucinatory experience which is phenomenally exactly the same way. But a hallucinatory experience of which Phenomenal Naivete were true would be a certain way phenomenally which it is not in fact. Phenomenal character could mislead after all.

One might react to this paradoxical reasoning by accepting that an experience could be phenomenally *F* but not *F*: that a hallucinatory experience could mislead not just about the world but about itself.⁴ The aim of the present essay is, however, to explore the approach of preserving the view that phenomenal character cannot mislead by rejecting Phenomenal Naivete, and offering, in its place, an alternative description of the phenomenal character of visual experience in general, on which seeing the world is, phenomenally, like seeing a picture.

In this, I take a cue from Cutting (2003, 216), who asks: "Is perceiving a picture like perceiving the world?" His answer: "Yes—and for some pictures to a large extent. This is one reason nonprofessional, candid photographs work so well; the cinema can act as such a culturally important surrogate for the everyday world; and precious little experience, if any, is needed to appreciate the content of pictures or film". Cutting's suggestion could be implemented in either of two ways. First, both an experience of a picture of a tree and an experience of the tree might be,

³ This claim would fall naturally out of a perspective on phenomenal character on which a phenomenal character is a determinate of the highly determinable property of being conscious.

Not every view of phenomenal character endorses the claim in the main text. On an *inner sense* view of phenomenal character, for *e* to be phenomenally *F* is for *e* to be innerly sensed as *F*; if inner sense is like outer sense, it will be fallible. Alternatively, on a view suggested by the discussion in Martin 2004, for *e* to be phenomenally *F* is for *e* not to be knowable by introspection to be non-*F*; unless introspection is infallible and all-revealing, *e* can be phenomenally *F* but not *F*. Still, not every higher-order awareness view of phenomenal character must allow for phenomenal error [AUTOCITE].

For my part, and though there is no room to defend the point here, I find the possibility of phenomenal error most repugnant: with me on this are Byrne (1997, 104–5); Neander (1998, sec. 5); Siewert (in preparation); and—as Siewert somewhat astoundingly points out—Brentano (1874/1973, 20) himself, who claims, concerning conscious mental states, that “as they appear, so they are in reality”. Lewis's (1980, 130) remark that “pain is a feeling. Surely that is uncontroversial. To have pain and to feel pain are one and the same. For a state [property] to be pain and for it to feel painful are likewise one and the same” suggests the related principle that (for certain properties *F*) *e* is phenomenally *F* iff *e* is *F*. The claim I endorse is the unrestricted left-right direction of this biconditional.

The claim in the main text, which I endorse, should be carefully distinguished from the claim—which I *emphatically* reject, indeed, the point of the paper is that our ordinary beliefs about phenomenal character are dependably mistaken—that if an ordinary subject were to come to believe one's experience to be *F* by phenomenological study, that subject's experience is *F*; the claims are equivalent only on the assumption that ordinary procedures of phenomenological study are infallible (perhaps there is an ideal procedure of phenomenological study which would be infallible).

An anonymous referee suggests that the claim in the main text is obviously false because every mundane visual experience is a case of seeing; the issues raised here seem fundamentally the same as those raised by Phenomenal Naivete.

⁴ This approach is endorsed in reaction to similar reasoning by Martin (2004) and discussed sympathetically, if not endorsed, by Crane (2005).

phenomenally, immediately of the tree.⁵ Second, both an experience of a picture of a tree and an experience of the tree might be, phenomenally, mediately of the tree. I will take the latter approach. More specifically, I follow Wollheim (1980, 2003) in his suggestion that when one sees a painting of a tree, the phenomenal character of the experience is that one sees the tree and its features in the marked surface and its features: much as when one sees a whale in a cloud. While I disagree with the natural description of visual phenomenal character, I acknowledge its allure.

Fortunately, if my description of the phenomenal character of experience is correct, this allure can be explained away.

In the first section of this essay, I propose a minimal strategy for resolving the paradoxical reasoning while avoiding the conclusion that phenomenal character can mislead. That strategy involves endorsing a highly abstract description of perceptual phenomenal character. In the second section, I fill in the details of that highly abstract description, completing the case for my alternative description of visual phenomenal character. The third section replies to a pair of objections against the minimal strategy. In the concluding fourth section, I extract from these replies a diagnosis of the allure of the natural description of visual phenomenal character.

1 A Minimal Strategy for Resolving the Paradox

Since Phenomenal Naivete is so plausible, one would minimize the amount of explaining away to be done by getting as close as possible to Phenomenal Naivete without succumbing to paradox. How close is this? Phenomenal Naivete entails both of the following claims:

1. An ordinary visual experience is, phenomenally, at least ostensibly of a property-instance which is external;
2. An ordinary visual experience is, phenomenally, of a property-instance which is immediately experienced.

One way to reject Phenomenal Naivete would be to reject (1) (one could make this more specific by saying either that for any experienced property-instance, it is, phenomenally, internal; or that for any experienced property-instance, it is neither, phenomenally, internal, nor, phenomenally, external; or some combination of these). But in taking this approach, one would incur an obligation to explain away the considerable plausibility of (1).⁶ Alternatively, one could reject (2) (e.g., by claiming that any phenomenal character of an experience is intrinsic, or at least not a relation to any individual). But, similarly, in taking this approach, one would incur an obligation to explain away the considerable plausibility of (2).⁷

⁵ Walton (1984) suggests a view of photographs on which in experience of a photograph of a tree, one, phenomenally, sees the tree but not the photograph.

⁶ One who endorsed a *classical sense-datum theory* of the nature of perceptual experience on which internal entities are objects of a prime relation of experiencing would need to take this tack.

⁷ One would need to take this tack if one endorsed an *intentional theory* of the nature of perceptual experience, on which for s to experience o is for there to be an intrinsic psychological correctness or satisfaction condition inhering in s's experience together with a non-psychological relation of satisfaction or match holding between the condition

These explanatory obligations could be avoided were one to endorse both (1) and (2). And this can be done while avoiding paradox. One need merely reject the following:

Conjunctive Assumption

In any normal experience, some *single* experienced property instance is both, phenomenally, external *and*, phenomenally, immediately experienced (perhaps this is true of many experienced property instances).

One must rather accept of those experienced property instances which are, phenomenally, external, that they are not, phenomenally, experienced immediately; and of those property instances which are, phenomenally, experienced immediately, that they are not, phenomenally, external. Of course in accepting all this, one must accept that in any ordinary visual experience, more than one property instance is experienced. But that this is so is obvious.

I therefore endorse the following set of attitudes as a minimal strategy for resolving the paradox:

- reject the possibility that phenomenal character might mislead;
- endorse (1);
- endorse (2); and
- reject the Conjunctive Assumption.

This set of attitudes seems to get one as close as possible to Phenomenal Naivete while avoiding paradox.

Once this strategy has been brought out into the open, a number of tasks still require completion. First, an *argument from transparency*, running as follows, is in need of reply: perceptual experience has a phenomenal character of “transparency”; but this claim together with (2) entails the Conjunctive Assumption, rendering the minimal strategy unavailable. Second, an *argument from presentation*, running as follows, is in need of reply: perceptual experience has a phenomenal character of “presentation”; but this claim together with (1) entails the Conjunctive Assumption, once again rendering the minimal strategy unavailable. (Of course both these arguments at this point are little more than schemata, evocatively described: clarification will follow when appropriate.) And third, the allure of the Conjunctive Assumption is in need of diagnosis.

2 Beyond the Minimal Strategy

It will help in carrying out these tasks to put some flesh on the abstract bones of the minimal strategy. In this section, I will en flesh the minimal strategy by, first, displaying certain properties

and the object. One would also need to take it if one endorsed a *representative theory* of the nature of perceptual experience, on which internal entities are objects of a prime relation of experiencing, and these entities somehow perceptually represent external entities of a certain kind to subjects. The phenomenological conclusions of this paper strongly suggest a version of the latter view.

which I will argue to witness (1) and (2), and, second, being more specific about the relation in which the experiences of these properties stand to one another, phenomenally.

2.1 Distal and Proximal Qualities

In this subsection, I will first ostend the properties I claim to witness (1) and (2), then argue, concerning the ostended properties, that they in fact do this. I will then assess the status of the latter properties as phenomenally, external, phenomenally, internal, or neither, pressing for the last of these.

2.1.1 Ostensible Experience of Proximal Qualities

I begin with a distinction between two sorts of properties of which, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences in any ordinary visual experience, which I will call the *distal* and the *proximal* qualities (following the terminology of Rock (1983); see also Todorovic 2002).⁸ The distinction can be drawn while leaving it open whether either the distal or the proximal qualities are, either in fact or phenomenally, immediate or mediate objects of experience; and for that matter whether either the distal or the proximal qualities are, either in fact or phenomenally, internal or external, let alone which specific theoretical properties they are to be identified with (if any).⁹ I argue as follows that, in any normal experience, phenomenally, both proximal and distal qualities are at least ostensibly experienced: (i) color experiences have phenomenal characters that are not identical to any property of at least ostensibly experiencing any color or illumination property instance; shape experiences have phenomenal characters that are not identical to any property of at least ostensibly experiencing any shape or orientation property instance; (ii) these phenomenal characters are best taken to be properties of at least ostensibly experiencing instances of certain properties; therefore (iii) in ordinary color experiences, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences instances of properties distinct from any color or illumination property, while in ordinary shape experiences, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences instances of properties distinct from any shape or orientation property. These properties are proximal qualities; colors, illumination properties, shapes, and orientation properties are distal qualities. I will now argue in detail for (i), and then for (ii).

For (i)

Familiarly, visual experience is both *color* and *shape constant*. Take a white card seen under diffuse white light and bring it under diffuse blue light: it will not come to look blue, but will rather continue to look white (though illuminated by blue light). Or take a penny seen head-on, and tilt it: it will not come to look elliptical, but will continue to look circular (though tilted).

So consider an experience WW of a white card under white light and an experience WB of a white card under blue light. In the former experience, one experiences an instance of surface whiteness and an instance of illumination whiteness; in the latter, one experiences an instance of

⁸ I don't intend by the terminology of 'proximal qualities' to suggest that there is anything especially *proximal* about them; I am merely following established usage in the psychological literature (see below).

⁹ I discuss some of the options that have been proposed on this issue in fn. 15.

surface whiteness and an instance of illumination blueness (moreover, this is how things are phenomenally in these experiences). And consider an experience HP of a penny seen head-on and an experience TP of a penny seen tilted. In the former, one experiences an instance of the surface shape circularity and an instance of the orientation property head-on-ness; in the latter, one experiences an instance of the surface shape circularity and an instance of the orientation property tiltedness (similarly, this is how things are phenomenally in these experiences).

But now consider two more experiences: BW, of a blue card under white light; and HE, of an elliptical object (like a Standard Oil sign). In BW, one experiences an instance of the color blueness and an instance of illumination whiteness; while in HE, one experiences an instance of the surface shape ellipticality and an instance of the orientation property head-on-ness. And this is how things are phenomenally in these experiences.

It is obvious upon reflection that BW and WB have a certain phenomenal character in common, which neither has in common with WW. Call this K. I will argue that what this amounts to is more specifically that there is a certain property B such that in BW, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences B, and such that in WB, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences B. And TP and HE have a certain phenomenal character L in common, which neither has in common with HP. And I will argue that what this amounts to is more specifically that in TP, phenomenally, there is a certain property E which one at least ostensibly experiences, and in HE, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences this same property.

First, note that, considering K, this phenomenal character cannot be identified with (a) the property of at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of surface blueness, (b) the property of at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of surface whiteness, (c) the property of at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of illumination blueness, or (d) the property of at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of illumination whiteness. After all, BW phenomenally has (a) and (d) but neither of the others, while WB phenomenally has (b) and (c) but neither of the others (for that matter, WW phenomenally has (b) and (d) but neither of the others). (An analogous argument can be given that L is neither the property of at least ostensibly experiencing circularity, nor the property of at least ostensibly experiencing ellipticality, nor the property of at least ostensibly experiencing tiltedness, nor the property of at least ostensibly experiencing head-on-ness.)

So if K is a property of the form ‘at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of Fness’, Fness in this case would seem to be neither a surface color nor an illumination property. And if L is a property of the form ‘at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of Fness’, Fness in this case would seem to be neither a shape or an orientation property.

For (ii)

Are K and L properties of this form? The alternative would seem to be that they are rather “intrinsic qualities” of their respective experiences. One way to make this proposal a bit more specific would be to appeal to the evocative terminology of the “adverbial theorists” (Ducasse, 1942; Chisholm, 1957), and hold that in each of BW and WB, the card, or one of its property instances, is “experienced bluely”, as it were; while in each of TP and HE, the seen object, or one of its property instances, is “experienced elliptically”, as it were. On this proposal, K would be the referent of the adverb ‘bluely’, and L would be the referent of the adverb ‘elliptically’.

One could object to this proposal on the Moorean ground (Moore, 1903) that experience is entirely lacking in intrinsic qualitative phenomenal characters. But I'm not sure that this is in general correct, so my objection will concern features local to the cases under consideration. I find that when I reflect on K, I notice a certain property B which I find to very closely resemble the surface color blueness; while when I reflect on L, I notice a certain property E which I find to very closely resemble the shape property of being an ellipse. On the proposal, it is very hard to see what either of these properties could be taken to be of, either than the experiences themselves. But experiences are events. And I find it very hard to see how an event could have either B or E: only a thing somehow extended in some sort of space could have these properties; but it does not make sense to speak of events as extended in space (except perhaps derivatively, by having spatially extended participants).¹⁰ Nor is it plausible that this is how things are *phenomenally*: my experience does not present itself to me as having the sort of incoherence necessary to subserve this proposal. So I conclude that neither B nor E is itself phenomenally or ostensibly a property of the experience, but must rather be (phenomenally, ostensibly) a property experienced in the experience. But if this is right, then K and L are both properties of the form 'at least ostensibly experiencing an instance of Fness'. (For what it's worth, this strikes me as the *prima facie* natural description.)

And if this is right, it follows that there is some property B which closely resembles the surface color blueness, which is neither a surface color nor an illumination property, and is such that in WB and BW, phenomenally, that property is at least ostensibly experienced. I call this property *proximal blueness*. And it follows that there is some property E which closely resembles the surface property of ellipticality, which is neither a shape property nor an orientation property, and is such that in TP and HE, phenomenally, that property is at least ostensibly experienced. I call this property *proximal ellipticality*. Proximal blueness is a determinate of the more determinable property *proximal color* (I spare the reader the details of picking out this property by way of repeated reflections on such properties as *proximal red*, which would be introduced by a trio of experiences just like BW, WB, and WW except that instead of a blue card and blue light, a red card and red light are involved); and proximal ellipticality is a determinate of the more determinable *proximal shape*. Most sweepingly the *proximal qualities* include at least every proximal color and proximal shape. By contrast, the *distal qualities* include at least surface colors, illumination properties, shapes, and orientations.¹¹

¹⁰ Compare Shoemaker (1994, 231) on "literal projectivism", the view "that we somehow project onto external objects features that in fact belong to our experiences of them":

this seems, on reflection, to be unintelligible. I am looking at a book with a shiny red cover. The property I experience its surface as having, when I see it to be red, is one that I can only conceive of as belonging to things that are spatially extended. How could that property belong to an experience or a sensation? Remember that an experience is an experiencing, an entity that is "adjectival on" a subject of experience.

It seems no more intelligible to suppose that a property of such an entity is experience as a property of extended material things than it is to suppose that a property of a number, such as being prime or being even, is experienced as a property of material things.

¹¹ Moreover, for what it's worth, the distinction between proximal and distal qualities as phenomenal objects of at least ostensible experience is a presupposition of much empirical work in perceptual psychology, an overview of which is to be found in Todorovic 2002. This seems to me to be good *prima facie* evidence for endorsing the presupposition.

Since in all relevant respects, BW, WB, TP, and HE are entirely ordinary, I conclude that in any ordinary experience, phenomenally, both distal and proximal qualities are at least ostensibly experienced.

2.1.2 Distal and Proximal Qualities and the Minimal Strategy

The discussion of the present subsection is, recall, intended to flesh out the minimal strategy. The minimal strategy endorses (1), that an ordinary visual experience is, phenomenally, of a property-instance which is external; and since it endorses (2), that an ordinary visual experience is, phenomenally, of a property-instance which is immediately experienced, it must also accept that an ordinary experience is of a property instance which is not, phenomenally, external—either by being, phenomenally, internal, or by being neither, phenomenally, external, nor, phenomenally, internal.

The distinction between distal and proximal qualities provides the necessary witness properties. Distal qualities, I think it must be agreed, are, phenomenally, external. And I will now defend the following claim:

(3) Proximal qualities are neither, phenomenally, external, nor, phenomenally, internal.

I will provide a phenomenological argument and a historical argument for (3).¹²

Higher-Order Properties of Proximal Qualities

The phenomenological argument runs as follows. Instances of proximal qualities are not, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experienced as having higher-order properties which would settle their status as internal or external (that is the *key factual premiss* of the argument). Now, I cannot see in what else an instance of F's being phenomenally, internal (external) could possibly consist aside from that instance's being, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experienced as having some higher-order property which would settle its status as internal (external); and I do not see how an instance of F's being phenomenally, internal (external) could be a primitive fact. So, if the claim I will defend is correct, (3) follows.

Now for defense of the key factual premiss. For an experience *e* of a proximal quality *P*, enumerate the higher-order properties that, phenomenally, *P* has or ostensibly has in *e*, and note that none of these higher-order properties determines a property which has it as internal or external. Then, for purposes of contrast, pick an experience *e'* of a suitably related distal quality *D*, enumerate the higher-order properties that, phenomenally, *D* has or ostensibly has in *e* which determine *D* as external; and note that, phenomenally, *P* has none of those properties. To avoid an off-putting awkwardness of exposition, sometimes rather than saying “phenomenally, in *e*, *D* at least ostensibly has the higher-order property *F*” I will sometimes say “in *e*, *D* looks to have *F*”.

¹² It may be that Moore agrees with (3). One way to explain why Moore is agnostic as to whether the sense-datum is part of the surface of his hand (Moore, 1925) is that he does not take a position whether proximal qualities are internal or external, and takes sense-data to be the bearers of proximal qualities, as in Moore 1957.

Consider, for instance, proximal ellipticality. Standardly, this quality looks to have certain *spatial* properties: it looks to be a shape property; it looks to have (or perhaps to confer upon its possessors) two axes of symmetry; to be convex (or perhaps as conferring convexity upon its bearers); it looks to involve no straight edges or corners; and, it looks a certain way which upon (extensive) *a priori* reflection, amounts to being definable in Cartesian coordinates as the curve traced out by, so to speak, a taut string attached to a pair of foci. These properties are all spatial properties; and can therefore be defined in terms of a suitable distance function. The mathematical notion of a distance function is highly abstract, and has natural applications to relationships between entities other than their distances in physical, external space; for instance, it might apply to a relationship between retinal cells, or representations in the brain. No apparent higher-order spatial properties of proximal ellipticality will suffice to rule out internal properties as candidates for its identity.¹³

Distal ellipticality, experienced in case HE, and distal circularity, experienced in cases TP and HP, look to have the higher-order property of being instantiated in the seen object. So if, in case TP, proximal ellipticality looked to have the higher order property of being instantiated in the tilted penny, that would settle its status as external. But, or so it seems to me, proximal ellipticality does not look to be instantiated in the penny: experience leaves me with no firm sense of whether it is instantiated in the penny. Rather, it leaves me deeply uncertain as to what object it is instantiated in. Similarly, distal ellipticality and distal circularity look, perhaps, to continue to be instantiated despite my closing my eyes or tipping the penny head on or edge-on. But, or so it seems to me, proximal ellipticality does not look to have either of these higher-order properties.¹⁴

(3): The Paper Trail

The historical argument for (3) runs, in outline: the historical record of discussion by philosophers and psychologists of the location of proximal qualities manifests considerable confusion as to their location, by contrast with discussion of distal qualities, where (almost) all agree they are external; this indicates that pretheoretically we have no clue about the location of proximal qualities but have a strong pretheoretic opinion that distal qualities are external; the best explanation of this is that distal qualities look external while proximal qualities neither look external nor look internal.

¹³ A largely analogous story goes for proximal blueness. This quality looks to stand in certain similarity and exclusion relations to other proximal colors or “regions of the proximal color solid”, where this solid is isomorphic to the surface color solid. But various internal qualities, such as the various sorts of excitation of the opponency systems, also fall into solids isomorphic to the surface color solid. A possible source of disanalogy between the color and shape cases is that colors look to have a certain “ineffable qualitative aspect” not captured in structural relations in the color solid, while shapes seem to be characterizable in purely quantitative terms. Still, this ineffable aspect doesn’t seem to settle their status as internal or external either.

¹⁴ I do not wish to deny, of course, that proximal qualities covary with distal qualities: change the surface color while holding the illumination constant or change the illumination while holding the surface color constant, and the proximal color changes; tilt the penny of constant shape and the proximal shape changes; bring it closer and the proximal size changes. But when one watches a movie, the experienced qualities of the light projected on the screen covary with the experienced qualities of the actors in the movie; and this does not mean that the look to have the qualities of the projected light.

Now to fill in the outline. Among philosophers, who typically discuss the natures of proximal qualities when inquiring after their nature, there is considerable disagreement as to their status;¹⁵ among psychologists, who discuss proximal qualities but rarely if ever in the context of this metaphysical project, there is either considerable confusion as to their status;¹⁶ or, among more metaphysically attuned psychologists, a studied lack of commitment as to their status.¹⁷

By contrast, while the occasional projectivist/idealist philosopher maintains that distal qualities are internal, the vast majority of philosophers who take an opinion on the location of the distal qualities take them to be external (if they take them to exist).¹⁸ As for psychologists, I know of no disagreement as to the location of the distal qualities.

¹⁵ Philosophers disagree over whether proximal qualities are internal or external. According to some (e.g., Russell (1912, ch. I), Peacocke (1983), and Lormand (1994)), proximal colors and shapes are internal properties, such as qualities of the optical system or brain. For instance, experiences of proximal blueness are correlated with tokenings of such internal properties as the property (of retinal nerve cells) of receiving a beam of light with a waveform in a certain class; as the property (of retinal nerve cells) of sending off a signal down the optic nerve of a certain sort (namely, that characteristic of receipt of waveforms in that class); and as the property (of representations in the brain) of tokening in a certain way (namely, the way characteristic of representations influenced by retinal cells which receive waveforms in that class). And experiences of proximal ellipticality are correlated with such internal properties as the property (of retinal nerve cells) of being stimulated elliptically; and as the property (of representations in the brain) of tokening in a certain way (namely, the way characteristic of representations influenced by elliptical stimulation of retinal cells).

Others disagree with this identification of proximal qualities with internal properties, taking proximal qualities to be external: for instance, Noë (2006, fn. 7) suggests that proximal colors are surface colors, so that in WB one—inconsistently—experiences both surface whiteness and surface blueness (Hume might agree: see Hume 1739/1978, 210–1); Shoemaker (1994) suggests that proximal colors are dispositional properties of surfaces, such as the disposition to cause in one an experience with a certain quality; a number of philosophers (e.g., Harman 1990, 250; Hill 1991, 97–9; Lycan 1996b, secs. 11–12; Tye 2000, 77–9; Byrne 2001b, sec. 5) have suggested that proximal ellipticality is the property (of external objects) of projecting an elliptical shape onto a certain frontal plane (that parallel to the plane of the viewer’s retina). An anonymous referee has suggested that proximal qualities might be disjunctions of conjunctions of distal qualities. (Egan (forthcoming) argues that proximal qualities are not properties at all, but rather property-like entities which he calls “centering features”.)

¹⁶ For instance:

One might refer to the **aspect of an object’s size** that is a function of its visual angle as perceived *extensity*.

A circle seen from the side, let us say at a 45-degree angle, may in one respect be said to continue to look circular, shape constancy, but its **elliptical retinal image is not without some perceptual representation**. [. . .] Although **it is difficult to describe the nature of this aspect of shape perception**, perhaps the term *extensity* relations will suffice. We are aware that one diameter of the circle has a greater *extensity* in our field of view than the other while nevertheless simultaneously experiencing the objective sizes of these diameters as equal. (Rock, 1983, 253, 256–7; my boldfacing)

In these passages, Rock first claims that “*extensity*” or proximal size is an external property, then claims that it is an internal property, then admits that he doesn’t know what sort of property it is. But he manifests no corresponding uncertainty about distal shapes.

¹⁷ For instance, in a recent survey of the psychological literature on perceptual experience of distal and proximal qualities, Todorovic detects a settled view in the psychological community that distal qualities are external, but no settled view about proximal qualities:

Distal size, also called ‘objective’ or ‘physical’ or ‘bodily’ size, **can be ascertained by standard means such as measuring tapes, geodesic devices etc.** Proximal size, also called ‘retinal’ or ‘angular’ size, is not easily measured directly but it can be calculated by the above or related formulas. Note that proximal size, **defined purely as the extent of a retinal region**, does not explicitly depend on any

Surely a major source of this asymmetry is that we have a strong pretheoretic intuition that distal qualities are external, while we lack any pretheoretic intuition of significant strength about the location of proximal qualities. The clash with intuition of projectivism is acknowledged as a cost of the view on both sides, and few have flocked to Berkeley's notorious claim that idealism is the naive view. Indeed, I know of no one who endorses projectivism or any of its variants on any but theoretical grounds.¹⁹

What could the source of *this* asymmetry be? The vast majority of the information about distal and proximal qualities available to the naive comes from perceptual experience. So such an asymmetry could not be sustained without a comparable asymmetry in how distal and proximal qualities look: with the former looking external and the latter neither looking external nor looking internal. One might object that the naive could remain neutral on the status of proximal qualities even in the presence of perceptual information about them if they had ignored proximal qualities. But the philosophers and psychologists who have discussed proximal qualities have not ignored them, and still seem strongly to face a deficit of naive intuition as to their status. So this line of objection seems to be blocked. I conclude that (3) is established: proximal qualities neither look external nor look internal.

2.1.3 Summary, and a Concluding Point

I have attempted, in this subsection, to establish the following points:

- Distal qualities witness the quantifier in (1);
- Proximal qualities witness the quantifier in (2);

particular distal object. However, proximal size **can also be attributed as a property of a concrete distal object**. This property depends on the vantage point from which the object is observed, and thus the same object can have many different proximal sizes. (Todorovic, 2002, 41; my boldfacing)

¹⁸ Among contemporary theorists of color, Perkins (1983) and Boghossian and Velleman (1989, 1991) are to my knowledge alone in endorsing projectivism; one has to go back to early 20th Century phenomenism to find much love for the view that distal shapes are internal.

¹⁹ Somewhat ironically in light of their commitment to the phenomenal externality of all ostensible objects of experience (to be discussed below), Harman and Tye both seem to agree that we have no pretheoretic clue as to the natures of proximal sizes:

I do not mean to suggest that the way the tree is visually presented as being from here is something that is easily expressed in words. In particular, I do not mean to suggest that the tree can thus be presented as subtending a certain visual angle only to someone who understands words like 'subtend' and 'angle' [. . .]. I mean only that this feature of a tree from here is an objective feature of the tree in relation to here, a feature to which perceivers are sensitive and which their visual experience can somehow represent things as having from here. (Harman, 1990, 250)

It is important to realize that the representation of the relational feature of being larger from here is nonconceptual. For a person to undergo an experience that represents one thing as larger relative to his viewing point than another, it suffices that the encoding feature of the array suitably track or causally covary with the instantiation of the viewpoint-relative relation. The person does not need to have any cognitive grasp of subtended angles. (Tye, 2000, 78)

Tye also appeals to his nonconceptual contents of which one has no cognitive grasp in his treatment of proximal ellipticality (79).

- Proximal qualities are neither, phenomenally, internal, nor, phenomenally, external.

These points leave open the question of whether distal qualities are (a) phenomenally, experienced mediately, or, rather (b) neither, phenomenally, experienced mediately, nor, phenomenally, experienced immediately. In the next subsection I will argue for (a).

Before doing so, I want to point out that while in any normal experience, phenomenally, both proximal and distal qualities are at least ostensibly experienced, the same is not so clearly correct of experiences that might be regarded as abnormal. Consider experience of a “red, round” afterimage. Sometimes one mistakes the afterimage for a distally red and round smudge on the wall, or a distally red and round will-o-wisp. If this is a *perceptual* mistake, it seems fair that one, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experiences instances of distal redness and circularity (and also proximal redness and circularity). However, one does not always make a perceptual mistake of this sort. Sometimes, an afterimage seems to be a mere “hole in the visual field”, rather than looking to be anything external. In this case, plausibly, phenomenally, one fails to even ostensibly experience any instance of a distal shape or color. Rather, phenomenally, one at least ostensibly experiences only instances of proximal redness and proximal roundness.²⁰

2.2 Seeing In

In this subsection, I will assess how, in an experience like WB, the experience of distal whiteness and the experience of proximal blueness are, phenomenally, related (or in an experience like TP how the experience of distal circularity and the experience of proximal ellipticality are, phenomenally, related).

My principal goal is to argue that when a proximal quality and a distal quality are “experienced together” in this way, phenomenally, the experience d of the distal quality has the experience p of the proximal quality as a (*proper*) *part*, in a sense to be clarified. Parthood is, as

²⁰ If one sometimes experiences instances of proximal qualities but not instances of distal qualities, this has two significant philosophical consequences.

First, it undermines the claim that every visual experience has some representational content (Chalmers, 2005). The simplest case of this is a visual experience in which one closes one’s eyes in a darkened room. Here there is no doubt that one’s experience is, phenomenally, at least ostensibly of a field of a color-like “blackness” quality. The obvious representationalist treatment of this case is to say that in this case, one visually represents that a certain (distally positioned?) field is (distal?) black; on the view I am pressing, one immediately, nonrepresentationally experiences an internal field suffused with proximal blackness. One sees no properties in it, and therefore representationally visually experiences nothing. (A similar treatment lends itself to the cases discussed at Tye 2000, 86–8.)

Second, the availability of the treatment undermines a certain argument that vision represents our causal interactions with seen objects. Siegel (in preparation) describes a case in which a doll begins to act like an afterimage, remaining in a fixed position in the visual field. She claims that there would be a phenomenal difference between a “slice” of this experience, and a “slice” of a normal experience of the same doll in the same position in the visual field with the same surround. In her view, (i) the phenomenal difference is a difference in the representational contents of the two slices, and (ii) the subjects of the two slices would visually represent the same distal shapes, orientations, colors, and illuminations. Siegel suggests that the difference in content is that in the normal case, one visually represents certain facts about causal interaction between one and the doll. However, my treatment suggests an alternative to (ii): in the normal case, one sees distal qualities in the proximal qualities, while in the afterimage case one does not, so that the difference in content is a difference in which distal shapes, orientations, colors, and illuminations are represented.

I will argue, a sort of mediation. So I am arguing that at least some visual experience is, phenomenally, mediate.

I will clarify what I mean by the claim that *p* is part of *d* by considering an objection. *d* and *p* are both events, and a natural first impression would be that when event *e* is part of event *e'*, *e* would be either a spatial or a temporal part of *e'* (e.g., the War in the Pacific was a spatial part, while the period of United States was a temporal part, of World War II). But it does not seem that *d* must have *p* as temporal part; and in any sense that could be given to calling *p* a spatial part of *d*, nor does it seem that *p* is a spatial part of *d*. In reply: the first impression is wrong, since an event can have a proper part which exactly overlaps it in space and in time. In the roasting of a goat on a spit, the rotating of the goat and the heating of the goat are both events, and each is a proper part of the roasting, though each exactly overlaps the roasting in space and time (Lewis, 1986a). Here the rotating is a part in the sense of a constituent of the roasting. The constituent-of relation is highly determinable; the spatial-part-of and temporal-part-of relations are among its determinates. My thesis will be that, phenomenally, *p* is a part of *d* in the sense that *p* bears some determinate of the constituent-of relationship to *d*; more generally:

(4) For a proximal quality and a distal quality to be “experienced together” (in the sense under consideration) is for the experience of the proximal quality to be, phenomenally, a part (in the sense described) of the experience of the distal quality.

I begin with a suggestive consideration on behalf of (4); I then provide an argument for it.

The Suggestive Consideration

Consider some paradigm cases of partial constitution: kidney-time slice *k* partly constitutes organism-timeslice *o*; pitch *p* partly constitutes a baseball game *g*; John’s earning *e* of \$50,000 partly constitutes John’s state *j* of being a judge (Szabó, 2003); the heating *h* of the goat partly constitutes its roasting *r*. Two features are common to these cases: (i) co-presence and (ii) asymmetric existential dependence. I don’t claim that if (i) and (ii) are met by a certain pair, one member of the pair constitutes the other: the reader will doubtless have little difficulty constructing perverse counterexamples to the thesis. But that (i) and (ii) are met strongly suggests that one member constitutes the other: indeed, that this is so constitutes a prima facie compelling explanation why (i) and (ii) are met. I will argue that both these features are met by *p* and *d* (in the right direction). I won’t survey every possible explanation to rule out the perverse ones—this is one of the reasons I put this case forth as merely suggestive—but I hope that these considerations will increase the reader’s confidence level in (4).

To see what I mean by ‘co-presence’, consider the following test. Ask: could I direct my attention over the portion of reality containing *a* in some way without thereby also directing my attention over the portion of reality containing *b*? Now ask the same the other way around. If the answer to either question was ‘no’, then *a* and *b* are co-present in the intended sense.²¹ For instance, one cannot direct one’s attention over the portion of reality containing *k* without directing one’s attention over the portion of reality containing *o* (after all, wherever *k* is, *o* is, if

²¹ I recognize that the notion of a “portion of reality” is imprecise; this is one of the reasons I put this case forth as merely suggestive.

not the other way around); one cannot direct one's attention over the portion of reality containing c without directing one's attention over the portion of reality containing j (after all, e is an aspect of the career j); and so forth. By contrast, Rove and Norquist are not in this sense co-present: if Rove is in Texas and Norquist is in Washington, one can direct attention over Texas (the portion of reality containing Rove) without directing it over Washington (the portion of reality containing Norquist), and vice versa. For some pairs of co-present entities, neither constitutes the other. Perhaps a ghost-time slice is in the process of passing through a machine-timeslice; if so, then the test for co-presence is met, but neither constitutes the other.

To see what I mean by 'asymmetric existential dependence', consider the following test. Ask: suppose that all the entities of the same kind as a located in the portion of reality containing b were to cease to exist without being replaced by other entities of that kind. Would b thereby cease to exist? Now ask the same the other way around. If the answers to these questions are different, then the one which would thereby disappear is asymmetrically existentially dependent upon the other.²² For instance, if all the organs located in the portion of reality containing o were to cease to exist without being replaced by other entities of that kind, o would cease to exist. But it does not seem that if all the organisms located in the portion of reality containing k were to cease to exist, k would cease to exist: the organs making up o might become scattered, thereby resulting in the annihilation of o, whilst k remained attached to an artificial support mechanism. Or, if John's earning of \$50,000 were to cease to exist without being replaced by any other events of compensation, perhaps John's career of being a judge would be at an end: plausibly, being a judge is a job; being a volunteer arbitrator would be an altogether different sort of thing. But it does not seem that if John's career as a judge (or any other job) were to end, John's earnings would thereby cease to exist: John might win the lottery and quit his job. By contrast, neither of the co-present ghost-time slice and machine-time slice seem to be asymmetrically existentially dependent on the other.

Now, consider the experience TP. Here, the experience of proximal ellipticity and the experience of distal circularity seem to pass the test for co-presence. By contrast, if one sees two objects a and b, a a few inches to the left of b, one's experiences of the shape of a and the shape of b seem to fail this test: the portion of the visual field containing the former experience and the portion of the visual field containing the latter experience no more overlap than do Washington and Texas.

But consider an experience of a red, round tomato. Here the experience of the color and the shape of the tomato seem to pass the test for co-presence: the portion of the visual field containing the former overlaps that containing the latter exactly.

Still, these experiences do not pass the test for asymmetric existential dependence (in either direction): delete all experience of color (perhaps because the lights have turned down so low that no colors are visible) and the shape might still be experienced; delete all experience of shape (perhaps because the tomato is being observed from so close up that it fills the visual field) and the color might still be experienced.

But it seems that, in WB, the experience of proximal blueness and the experience of distal whiteness are co-present: the portion of the visual field containing the former overlaps that containing the latter exactly. And the latter experience seems to be asymmetrically existentially

²² I recognize that the notion of a "kind of entity" is imprecise; this is one of the reasons I put this case forth as merely suggestive.

dependent on the former. Delete all experience of distal qualities, and former experience might still occur. After all, as I argued in the “concluding point” of the previous subsection, experience of proximal qualities without experience of distal qualities seems, if far from the norm, then at least relatively mundane. By contrast, I cannot imagine how experience as it actually is of distal qualities could possibly occur without experience of proximal qualities: would there be merely a “glow” of color without any actually experienced quality from which it glows? Contemplating the possibility reduces one to inarticulacy.

So when one experiences a proximal and a distal quality “together”, the two are co-present; and the experience of the latter is asymmetrically existentially dependent on the experience of the former. So the *prima facie* test for constitution indicates that the experience of the distal quality is partly constituted by the experience of the proximal quality. Finally, since the argument given here appealed only to aspects of experience revealed to phenomenal study, I conclude that (4) is correct.

The Argument

I will argue that first, to experience a distal quality “together with” a proximal quality is, phenomenally, to experience the distal quality in the proximal quality;²³ and second, that to experience a in b is for one’s experience of b to be, phenomenally, part of one’s experience of a.

Two sorts of considerations support the first claim. First, consider an experience PTP in which one sees a painting of a tilted penny. In such an experience, as Wollheim (1980, 2003) points out, one, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experiences both the elliptical shape on the canvas and the circular shape of the depicted penny: the latter in the former. I claim that the relation between one’s experience of the elliptical shape and one’s experience of the circular shape in experience PTP is, phenomenally, the same as the relation between one’s experience of proximal ellipticality and one’s experience of distal circularity in experience TP: phenomenally, one experiences distal circularity in proximal ellipticality.

Consider how these relations strike you: does first-personal reflection on experience enable you to detect any differences between these two relations? Of course there are phenomenal differences between the experiences taken as a whole: TP involves a much stronger impression of three-dimensionality; PTP involves a “paradoxical” combination of experienced flatness and three-dimensionality. But just focusing on the relation between the subexperiences of the properties in PTP and the relation between those in TP, I find no phenomenal difference. But if not, then one experiences distal qualities in proximal qualities.

Second, note that experiencing-in is transitive. Suppose that one sees a photograph of the *Mona Lisa*: then one sees the *Mona Lisa* in the photograph, and sees *Mona Lisa* in the *Mona Lisa*; but one also sees *Mona Lisa* in the photograph; and this seems to generalize.

Now consider experience PTP. One experiences proximal ellipticality; distal ellipticality; and distal circularity. One experiences the first “together with” the second; the second “together

²³ Noë (2006) agrees on this point:

Just as we see the circularity in the elliptical experience, so we see the invariant color *in* the apparent variability. [footnote: Wollheim [. . .] has laid emphasis on the idea of *seeing-in*. We see an object *in* a picture, for example. Just as it is the case that you see a picture, and, in seeing the picture, see what the picture depicts (and so in that sense see the depicted item in the picture), so I want to suggest that we see the uniform color of the wall *in* its variegated surface.]

with” the third; and—I daresay—the first “together with” the third. Moreover, the case seems to generalize: in the *Mona Lisa* case, one experiences *Mona Lisa*’s shape, the shape of the outline of *Mona Lisa* on the *Mona Lisa*, the shape of that outline on the photo, and some proximal shape all “together” (in the relevant sense).

It would be nice if this interaction between seeing-in and experiencing a distal quality together with a proximal quality could be explained in more primitive terms. The simplest explanation is that the relation between an experience of a proximal quality and an experience of a distal quality seen “together with” it is just the same as the relation between an experience of a shape on a painting and an experience of a shape when the latter shape is seen in the former shape: one experiences distal qualities in proximal qualities.

Now, concerning the second claim: phenomenally, experiencing-in is a kind of experiential mediation. When one experiences a in b, one’s experience of a is, phenomenally, mediated by one’s experience of b. When one sees a whale or its shape in a cloud, the whale (its shape) is not, phenomenally, immediately presented to one. Rather, phenomenally, it is experienced by experiencing the cloud. And, when e occurs by e’ occurring, e is mediated by e’ (according to Jackson’s classic analysis of mediation Jackson 1977, ch. 1).

Now, there seem to be two ways in which e can occur by e’ occurring. Either e’ causes e, or e’ constitutes e. But, phenomenally, when one experiences a in b, one’s experience of b is not, phenomenally, a cause of one’s experience of a. After all, one’s experience of a and one’s experience of b are, phenomenally, simultaneous. And if e causes e’, the two events are not simultaneous. So, to experience a in b is for one’s experience of b to, phenomenally, partly constitute one’s experience of a: as per (4).

As a bonus, note that if this last claim is correct, the transitivity of experiencing can be explained. If, seeing a in b is just having one’s experience of b (phenomenally, and thus given our presuppositions, in fact) as part of one’s experience of a, such an explanation falls directly out of the transitivity of parthood: one’s experience of *Mona Lisa* has (in fact and phenomenally) one’s experience of the *Mona Lisa* as a part, which has one’s experience of the photo (in fact and phenomenally) as a part; so one’s experience of *Mona Lisa* has one’s experience of the photo as a part. So, “de-analyzing”, one sees *Mona Lisa* in the photo.²⁴

2.3 Summary

The position on the phenomenal character of visual experience taken by the advocate of the minimal strategy is that an ordinary visual experience is, phenomenally, of a property-instance which is external, and, phenomenally, of a property-instance which is immediately experienced; where any property-instance meeting the former condition meets the latter as well.

²⁴ Note also that, according to Wollheim (2003, 3),

when I look at the Manet, my perception is twofold in that I simultaneously am visually aware of the marked surface and experience [. . .] a clump of trees. These are two aspects of a single experience. They are not two experiences: they are not two simultaneous experiences, as I used to believe, nor are they two alternating experiences.

It seems wrong to say that when one sees a in b, the experience of a and the experience of b are not two experiences—one is of a and the other is not, after all. Still, if one endorses Lewis’s view that a thing is “partly identical” with its parts (Lewis, 1991, sec. 3.6), then Wollheim’s claim is partly vindicated.

In the previous section, I defended this minimal strategy as the best reply to the paradox. In this section, I have suggested that the minimal strategy should be enhanced in the following four ways. First, the properties instances of which are, phenomenally, external are such distal qualities as distal circularity, distal ellipticality, flatness, tiltedness, distal blueness, distal whiteness, blue illumination, and white illumination. Second, the properties instances of which are, phenomenally, immediately experienced are such proximal qualities as proximal circularity, proximal ellipticality, proximal blueness, and proximal whiteness. Third, these proximal qualities are neither, phenomenally, internal, nor, phenomenally, external. Fourth, when a distal quality is “experienced together” with a proximal quality, the experience of the distal quality is, phenomenally, mediated by the experience of the proximal quality; more specifically, the latter experience is, phenomenally, part of the former; more specifically still, the distal quality is seen in the proximal quality.

3 Criticisms of the Minimal Strategy

In this section, I will discuss two objections to the minimal strategy for resolving the paradox: one from an alleged phenomenal character of “transparency”, and one from an alleged phenomenal character of “presentation”. My discussion of these issues will presuppose the fleshed out version of the minimal strategy, developed in the previous section.

3.1 Transparency

First, the argument from transparency. Recall that the argument runs: perceptual experience has a phenomenal character of “transparency”; but this claim together with (2) entails the Conjunctive Assumption, rendering the minimal strategy unavailable. The key point in need of explication is the claim that experience has a phenomenal character of “transparency”, a claim much discussed in the recent literature. The claim is metaphorical, of course: in the literal sense, material objects rather than events are transparent. The metaphor has been cashed out in the recent literature in a number of different ways, only one of which threatens the minimal strategy.²⁵

²⁵ Among transparency-related claims that do not bear on the minimal strategy are that . . .

a. . . . some quality which one at least ostensibly experiences looks external (Harman 1996, 253; Tye 1995, 30, 2000, 45–6; Shoemaker 1990, 100–1, 1991, 132). In the absence of some reason to believe that if so, *every* quality which one at least ostensibly perceptually experiences looks external, this poses no threat to the minimal strategy.

b. . . . no quality which one at least ostensibly perceptually experiences looks internal. The minimal strategy is compatible with this claim.

c. . . . one cannot become introspectively aware of intrinsic qualities of experience; or for that matter that every phenomenal character is not, or not phenomenally, or phenomenally not, an intrinsic quality of experience (Moore 1903; Harman 1990, 251; Shoemaker 1990, 100–1, 1991, 132; Tye 1995, 30, 2000, 45–6). The minimal strategy is entirely independent of whether any phenomenal character is an intrinsic quality of experience.

d. . . . one can never turn one’s attention away from distal qualities, or qualities which look external (Martin 2002, 380; Siewert 2004, 35). The minimal strategy is compatible with this, just so long as one can sometimes also

The threatening claim can be extracted from Harman’s allegation that “when you see a tree, [. . .] the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree” (Harman, 1990, 251), which he presents as the result of phenomenological study. Evidently, then, Harman endorses the claim that when one sees a tree, phenomenally, the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the tree. Given that, phenomenally, the tree is external, this amounts to the claim that when one sees a tree, phenomenally, the only features there to turn your attention to will be external. On the assumption that one does not experience any feature in *e* unless one can turn one’s attention to it, this amounts to the claim that when one sees a tree, phenomenally, the only features the experience is of are external. It is clear from context that the claim is intended to apply to all normal experiences, so Harman seems to intend the following:

(5) For any quality instance and any normal experience, if, phenomenally, the latter is at least ostensibly of the former, then, phenomenally, the former is external.

(5) is popular,²⁶ and conflicts with the minimal strategy: after all, the Conjunctive Assumption follows from (5) together with (2). But I will provide a pair of explanations of the allure of (5) that do not assume its truth. If these explanations are successful, the minimal strategy emerges unscathed.

First, perhaps (5) derives its popularity from a tendency to be confused with one of the theses discussed in fn. 25.²⁷

Second, perhaps (5) derives its popularity from the fact that, when assessing whether it is true, its advocates have only considered distal qualities (which do look external). After all, with noteworthy consistency, advocates of (5) take themselves to have established the claim merely

attend to qualities which neither look external nor look internal.

e. . . . *every* object which one at least ostensibly perceptually experiences looks external (Thau, 2002, 34). The minimal strategy makes no prediction that instances of proximal qualities look to be instantiated in any object. Not all experienced or ostensibly experienced qualities do—consider glare seen on a windshield.

f. . . . one can only learn which phenomenal character a visual experience has by determining which qualities one at least ostensibly experiences in that experience (Byrne, 2001b, sec. 3).

The advocate of the minimal strategy can happily grant this: proximal qualities are qualities one experiences. However, if this claim is enhanced with the claim that those qualities must be external (as per the “central datum of transparency” from Chalmers 2005, sec. 8), one way of reading this is as a conjunction of the previous principle with (5). On another way of reading it, the claim is merely that any act of attention to any quality must have an act of attention to a distal quality as a part. I’m not convinced by this, but it does not conflict with the minimal strategy.

²⁶ It is endorsed by Byrne (2002), Dretske (1995), Hilbert and Kalderon (2000), Levine (2003), Loar (2003a,b), Lycan (2001), Martin (2002), Shoemaker (1991, 1994, 2001), Thau (2002), and Tye (1992, 1995, 2000).

²⁷ For instance, (5) differs merely by a scopal flip from the plausible claim (b) that never, if an experience is ostensibly of a quality, phenomenally, that quality is internal. Or, Harman in particular quite clearly fails to adequately distinguish (5) from the plausible claim (c) that no phenomenal character is an intrinsic quality.

Or perhaps advocates of (5) take themselves to have some argument to (5) from one of those theses. To my knowledge, however, no advocate of (5) has ever presented such an argument.

after examining distal qualities;²⁸ I know of no explicit attempt to assess whether proximal qualities in particular look external.²⁹

Proximal qualities seem to have been ignored. But if some aspect of phenomenal character has been ignored, then the subject's thoughts about that aspect will treat it as if it does not exist, and its presence will not be reflected in the subject's theoretical work.

One might protest: surely the advocates of (5) were not so careless as to ignore proximal qualities. But I will now give two reasons not to be surprised had proximal qualities had been ignored.

The first is that we seem to have a general tendency to ignore proximal qualities, and that turning attention to them requires a special effort of will; by contrast, our natural direction of focus is on distal qualities. (This point seems to be strongly suggested by the fact that producing realistic paintings is difficult or impossible for the untrained subject.) I won't speculate on what causes our natural focus to point in this direction: this seems to be an empirical matter for psychologists of perception to discover. Perhaps the answer is as simple as the one Broad (1923, 95–6) gives, namely that we ignore proximal qualities because we don't care about them—because only distal qualities, as Broad puts it, “cut any ice”.³⁰

²⁸ For instance (boldfaced emphases mine):

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. (Harman, 1990, 251) But **neither the blue nor the red** is an object of *introspective* awareness; these are experienced, perceptually, rather than introspectively, as located outside one, in the sky or the tomato, not as features of one's experience. (Shoemaker, 1990, 100–1)

In general, the properties we are aware of in sense experience—**colors, tastes**, etc.—are experienced as belonging to things in our environment or parts of our bodies [. . .], not as features of an experience, qua mental state or event. (Shoemaker, 1991, 132)

Now shift your gaze inward and try to become aware of your experience itself, inside you, apart from its objects. Try to focus your attention on some intrinsic feature of the experience that distinguishes it from other experiences, something other than what it is an experience *of*. The task seems impossible: one's awareness seems always to slip through the experience to **blueness and squareness**, as instantiated together in an external object. In turning one's mind inward to attend to the experience, one seems to end up concentrating on what is outside again, on external features or properties. (Tye, 1995, 30)

You do not experience any of these qualities as qualities of your experience. For example, **if blueness is one of the qualities and roundness another**, you do not experience your experience as blue or round. (Tye, 2000, 45–6)

Harman's transparency argument can be extended to the purely hallucinatory case. Suppose you are looking at a real, bright yellow lemon in good light. Suppose also that you then hallucinate a second, identical lemon to the right of the real one. [. . .]

[T]he appearances are just the same in structure. The **yellowness** involved in the second-lemon appearance is exactly the same property as is involved in the first. (Lycan, 2001, 20)

²⁹ Advocates of (5) have of course discussed experience of proximal qualities: e.g., Harman's and Tye's discussions of proximal size discussed earlier in this section. Still, without exception, the claim defended about experience of proximal qualities is that such experience is compatible with the claim that every experienced or ostensibly experienced quality is external, because nothing in the phenomenal character of those experiences rules out theoretically identifying proximal sizes with these or those external properties. But this is compatible with (3).

³⁰ For a vivid example of how our interests can influence what captures attention and what is ignored, note that when watching television or movies, one's attention is drawn to distal qualities seen in the representing image and away from the qualities of the TV screen in which those distal qualities are seen. Once I watched an old, decaying videotape of Johnny Guitar. At the beginning of the movie, I was very annoyed that the image jumped with a loud

The second is based in a peculiar aspect of the discussion of color or shape experience: (a) we tend to gravitate toward considering a particular sort of scenario when thinking about color or shape experience; and (b) in this sort of scenario, proximal and distal qualities are very difficult to discriminate. But turning one's attention from a to b requires discriminating a from b, so that if one's attention were already on distal qualities, it would be very difficult for one to turn one's attention to proximal qualities. I will now argue for (a) and (b).

First, concerning (a). Consider the request to consider an experience of a red thing—a request undoubtedly familiar to one with even a passing familiarity in the literature under discussion.³¹ The request may seem to be underdetermined: what color is the illumination? One naturally fills in the request by assuming it to be white.

Now, concerning (b). When a distal color is seen under white light, that color is difficult to distinguish from the proximal color in which it is seen: for instance, in experience BW, proximal blueness is difficult to distinguish from distal blueness. After all, there is some higher-order property that captures much of how proximal cornflower blue looks to one, which also captures much of how surface cornflower blue looks to one. In particular, as argued above, proximal cornflower blue looks to stand in the same relations of similarity and exclusion to other proximal colors as surface cornflower blue look to stand in to other surface colors; both also look “cool” and less than maximally “saturated”. And, if there is an “ineffable qualitative” aspect to colors not exhausted in these quantifiable and synesthetic higher-order properties, both proximal and surface cornflower blue look to one to have this aspect.

By which features is one to distinguish the proximal from the distal color in case BW? The distal color appears to one as being on the surface of an object, while, as argued above, the proximal color appears to one neither as on the surface of an object nor as not on the surface of an object. But this won't enable one to tell surface and proximal color apart (one can't be confident that the color isn't on the surface of an object); and there is no other difference in how they appear to one. So, it seems, one won't be able to discriminate them at all; as I was attempting to show.³²

3.2 Presentation

squawk every few seconds.

Eventually, I became wrapped up in the action. As the credits began to roll, I snapped to noticing the incredibly annoying effect once again. Had I come to ignore the annoying effect as I became wrapped up in the exciting narrative? Incredulous, I rewound the tape to determine whether the annoying effect had temporarily vanished because the middle of the tape was in better condition than the ends. Astonishingly, the annoying effect had never vanished—my powers of ignoring had suppressed it from my attention!

Similarly, wrapped up in the condition of distal qualities, we simply pay no attention to them. Although they are, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experienced, from the standpoint of the subject's thought about the experience, they may as well not be there.

³¹ See the examples in fn. 28.

³² The resemblance of a proximal quality to the distal quality seen in it under certain environmental conditions seems to generalize to certain flat surface shapes such as ellipticality, circularity, and squareness: proximal ellipticality resembles surface ellipticality when the latter is seen head-on. This effect does not manifest for 3-D shapes not intimately tied to flat surface shapes. What is the canonical viewing condition for a Henry Moore sculpture, or an Eames chair? But note that in the thought experiments of the advocates of (5), the shape qualities described are 2-D: squareness and roundness.

I will now consider the objection from presentation. Recall that the argument runs: perceptual experience has a phenomenal character of “presentation”; but this claim together with (1) entails the Conjunctive Assumption, rendering the minimal strategy unavailable. The key point in need of explication is the claim that experience has a phenomenal character of “presentation”, a claim garnering less self-conscious treatment in the recent literature than the claim that experience is transparent, but which still has a grip over philosophical discussion of perceptual experience stretching back centuries.³³ The persistence of this tendency strongly suggests that it has a basis in the phenomenal character. Once again the metaphor must be cashed out; and once again a number of ways of cashing it out fail to threaten the minimal strategy.³⁴

The terminology of ‘present’ strongly suggests immediacy: if a person is present at a meeting, the person is directly in the meeting room, rather than off in a cafe; so a thought that is very likely conveyed by the metaphor is that if one’s experience of x takes the form of presentation of x to one, one immediately experiences x. So the following principle seems very plausible:

(6) For any quality instance and any normal³⁵ experience, if, phenomenally, the latter is at least ostensibly of the former, then, phenomenally, the former is an object of immediate experience.³⁶

³³ For substantiation of this historical claim, see [AUTOCITE].

³⁴ For instance:

(a) The metaphor connotes passivity: if an alpaca coat is presented (given as a present) to Richard, Richard passively receives the coat, rather than actively acquiring it. Consider along similar lines the thought that perception involves “givenness”, or, in Kantian terminology, “receptivity”. (Searle (1983, 46) seems to be endorsing this idea in his claim that a visual experience has an “involuntariness which is not shared by a belief”.)

If perception involved a phenomenal character of passive consciousness—if, for any quality instance and any normal experience, if, phenomenally, the latter is at least ostensibly of the former, then, phenomenally, the former is an object of passive consciousness—this would also distinguish perception from thought and explain their phenomenal differences. Intuitively, perceiving x is a kind of consciousness of x that is not an action, while thinking about x is a type of action. After all, we take credit or blame for our thoughts: one who thinks vile thoughts is liable to keep this fact to oneself, while internally excoriating oneself for this; one who thinks clever thoughts is liable to share them with friends so as to bask in their acclaim. By contrast, the victim of an unpleasant experience is to be pitied (as such) and the beneficiary of a pleasant experience perhaps envied (as such), but neither is to be praised or blamed (as such). What are praiseworthy and blameworthy are actions; events that merely happen to one are neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy. It is difficult to see what the source of these distinctive reactive attitudes would be aside from the phenomenal contrast I describe.

The minimal strategy is, of course, consistent with experience of objects being, phenomenally, entirely passive.

(b) In much of this literature, ‘presentation’ seems to be regarded as an antonym of ‘representation’ (Strawson, 1979; Searle, 1983; Valberg, 1992; Snowdon, 1992; Martin, 1997; Sturgeon, 2000; Crane, 2005): so that for e to, phenomenally, present o is just for it to phenomenally, not represent o (or not, phenomenally, represent o?). (6) is then brought out to explain the manifest phenomenal distinction between an experience of o and a (representational) thought about o.

It is far from obvious whether all mediated experience is representational experience: does picture experience represent the pictured object? If so, in what sense? If not, then the minimal strategy is compatible with (6) so understood.

³⁵ This must be taken to exclude picture experiences, since when one sees x in a picture, one, phenomenally, at least ostensibly experiences x, but, phenomenally, the experience of x is mediated.

(6) is popular,³⁷ if contested,³⁸ and conflicts with the minimal strategy: after all, the Conjunctive Assumption follows from (6) together with (1). But I will provide two explanations of the allure of (6) which do not assume its truth. If these explanations succeed, the minimal strategy emerges unscathed.

First, perhaps (6) derives its popularity from a tendency to be confused with one of the theses discussed in fn. 34.³⁹

Second, one of my central claims about proximal qualities (defended in the previous subsection) and one of my central claims about experiential mediation (namely, (4)) together yield an explanation of the allure of (6). Suppose that one is assessing (6). One might go about doing this as follows:

(a) Focus on some experience, and try to determine by introspective reflection whether, in that experience, something is an immediate object of experience. One of my central claims about experiential mediation is that any experience, phenomenally, has an immediate experience of something as a part. Since this is so, the result of one's introspection would be positive: one would determine that, in that experience, something is indeed an immediate object of experience.

(b) Still focused on that experience, try to determine by introspective reflection whether anything is a mediate object of experience. A natural way to do this would be to find a mediating entity. But one is unlikely to do so: after all, in accord with one of my central claims about proximal qualities, we are very likely to ignore them. Failing to notice any mediating entity, the result of introspection would be negative: one would determine that, in that experience, nothing is a mediate object of experience.

Putting these two results together (and recognizing that they were arrived at via introspective reflection), one would conclude that (6) is the case.

4 The Allure of the Conjunctive Assumption

³⁶ Perhaps I am reading too much into advocates of the view that experience is presentational: they might intend merely that every visual experience, phenomenally, involves an immediate experience of something (this would provide the needed contrast with thought: a thought about x—unless, perhaps it is a “de re” thought—does not involve immediate consciousness of anything).

This would be compatible with the minimal strategy as I have fleshed it out, since, as I have argued, every experience of anything has, phenomenally, an immediate experience of something as part.

³⁷ It is endorsed by Sturgeon (2000) and Martin (2002), among others, and discussed sympathetically by Crane (2005).

³⁸ For instance, Noë (2006) claims that phenomenally, proximal qualities are present, while distal qualities are, phenomenally, at best “present as absent”. While I'm not fully certain I understand Noë's claim here, I strongly suspect he intends that while distal qualities are objects of perceptual experience, they are not *presented* in experience. If this is what Noë intends, it strikes me as correct.

³⁹ (6) might be confused with the thesis discussed under (a) owing to the dual nature of the metaphor of presentation. Experience is, phenomenally, passive; one therefore thinks of experience as, phenomenally, a “presentation” of its objects; attempting to unpack this metaphor, one lights on the reading involving immediacy; and thereby concludes that experience is, phenomenally, an immediate awareness of its objects.

Second, (6) might be confused with the thesis discussed under (b) owing to a confusion of two senses of ‘represent’. Suppose that experience, phenomenally, does not involve a correctness-condition; it is therefore, phenomenally, nonrepresentational in one sense; one recognizes this fact, but understands ‘nonrepresentational’ as involving lack of a representing intermediary, and therefore as phenomenally immediate.

At this point, it is but a small step to an explanation of the allure of the Conjunctive Assumption. Having convinced oneself of (6), one might then go on to consider by introspective reflection whether the immediately experienced entities are internal or external. Fishing around for an entity to assess this question about, one would likely ignore any instances of proximal qualities, and instead attend only to instances of distal qualities. These of course look external, so one would conclude that they are external. Recognizing that this conclusion was reached via introspective reflection, one would conclude that, in any experience, a single experienced property instance is both, phenomenally, external, and, phenomenally, immediately experienced. But this is just the Conjunctive Assumption.

Notice that if I am correct about the reasoning that leads to the allure of (5), (2), and the Conjunctive Assumption, this reasoning rests on ignoring a certain fact which serves to undermine these theses: namely, that every experience is, phenomenally, in part of instances of proximal qualities. For this reason, the fact that these doctrines are alluring provides no evidence for them. We are guilty of a sort of projective error: we project the feature of being immediately experienced, which is in fact a feature of proximal qualities, out onto mediately experienced distal qualities.⁴⁰

To put my projective error theory in some sort of historical perspective, note that on one way of reading Hume's early presentation of an "argument from illusion" in 'Skepticism Concerning the Senses' (Hume, 1739/1978, 210–1), he intends to show that once we turn our attention to proximal qualities, we will inevitably be led to overturn our pretheoretic conception of experience. The discussion of this essay can be taken in this spirit. In my view, our pretheoretic view of the phenomenal character of experience is given by Phenomenal Naivete. But Phenomenal Naivete derives its allure from our tendency to ignore proximal qualities. Once we turn our attention to proximal qualities, the allure of Phenomenal Naivete evaporates.

While I don't agree with Hume's claim that only "a very little reflection and philosophy is sufficient" to overturn our pretheoretic view (the preceding discussion consists of, I daresay, quite a substantial helping of philosophy); and while, though Hume's concern to correct what he took to be an error in our pretheoretic conception of the nature of experience, my aim is to correct an error in our pretheoretic conception of the phenomenal character of experience; if one squints enough, Hume and I are in agreement.

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⁴⁰ Unlike more familiar projective error theories of color (e.g., Boghossian and Velleman 1989), we do not mis-ascribe internal features to external objects; rather, we mis-ascribe the nature of our perceptual condition with respect to proximal features to distal features. Moreover, the error is cognitive, in how we think about experience, rather than in experience itself.

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