Experience as a limit

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Overview

• Introduction
• On the X-relation
• Menus of views
• Zombies and the limit view
• The case for the limit view
INTRODUCTION
Aim

• Disjunctivism: veridical experiences “take in” the environment
• What is the relevant background metaphysics?
A test case

• A view about the property that specifies the conscious nature of a veridical perceptual experience of an item c “as red”:
  • Being a case of Rly seeing c’s redness
    – R is a sort of placeholder for “whatever is held constant between a subject and his inverted duplicate looking at opposite-colored objects”
  • Redness is monadic
• What is presupposed if we like that property?
ON THE X-RELATION
The X-relation

• X is a relation between properties and events
• e’s manner of being experiential is F iff X(F,e)
  – I’m assuming “manners of being experiential” to be more robust than mere conjunction, something like a “family” of determinates of consciousness
• e is an experience iff there is some F such that X(F,e)
• Note that these are mere biconditionals, no claims yet about explanation or “in virtue”
X and Instantiation

• $X(F,e) \rightarrow \text{Instantiated-by}(F,e)$
  – Accordingly $X$ isn’t intentional
  – Not “projective phenomenal character-of” reln

• $X$ is smaller than Instantiation
  – Not every property experience $e$ instantiates is part of its manner of being experiential
  – Perhaps some events that instantiate a certain matter of being experiential are not experiences???
X’s metaphysical status

• Is X a mere conjunction?
  – Eg e instantiates F and F is experiential

• Or a manner of instantiation?
  – Eg e instantiates F experientially

• A relation or an operator?

• Ontologically committing or syncategorematic?

• At present let’s leave such questions open
A bit more on X

• All facts supervene on the facts not about experience and the facts about X
• Accordingly can’t change the facts about experience except by changing the facts about X
• The possible facts about experience are exhausted by the possible facts of X-relatedness
Sometimes and always

• F is sometimes experiential iff:
  – Sometimes, when instantiated, it’s instantiated as a manner of being experiential
    • \( \exists e: Fe \) \( X(F,e) \)

• F is always experiential iff:
  – Whenever it’s instantiated, it’s instantiated as a manner of being experiential
    • \( \forall e: Fe \) \( X(F,e) \)

• Quantifiers ranging over possibilia
Questions about sometimes and always

I. Of the properties, how many are sometimes experiential?
   – All or some? (None is the wrong answer)

II. Of the properties that are sometimes experiential, how many are always experiential?
   – All, some, or none?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. All</td>
<td>Panpsychism</td>
<td>Sometimes the property suffices, o/w X can always get involved</td>
<td>X alone makes for experience = Limit view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Some</td>
<td>Special properties make for experience</td>
<td>Sometimes the property suffices, o/w X sometimes can get involved</td>
<td>Weak X, needs an oomph from the right properties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MENUS OF VIEWS
Positions to ignore

• <All, All>: panpsychism seems a bit wack
• <*, Some>: isolate pure strains first
• <Some, None>: seems very complicated
Positions to highlight

- \(<\text{Some}, \text{All}>\) = special property view
- \(<\text{All}, \text{None}>\) = limit view
Special property views

• Certain properties are distinctive of and sufficient for experience.

• Familiar examples:
  – Qualia theory
  – Brentanoesque “phenomenal intentionality” views
  – Acquaintance with the manifest
  – Mixed views ...
More on special property views

- Hume-style and Ockham-style considerations support analyzing $X(F,e)$ as follows:
  - For $X(F,e)$ is for [Fe and F is a special property]
  - $X$ a reflex of instantiation + the special category
  - Does no real work in yielding experientiality
Limit views

• Picture here is nonexperiential facts being brought within experience;
• The fact that e is F is “permeated with consciousness”
• Such permeation is the sole source of consciousness
• Experience serves not as a thing but as a sort of “limit”
Friends of limit views

• These are rather more rare; examples:
  – Lichtenberg?? (Es denkt)
  – Wittgenstein??
  – Kripkenstein?
  – Valberg’s “horizontal” conception
More on limit views

• Here F’s association with experience is entirely contingent
• Since there is experience, this supports taking X to reflect a distinctive aspect of reality
• Here we can say that the X facts are fundamental to experience
  – The biconditionals should be “is for”s:
  – For e to be experientially F is for X(F,e)
  – For X(F,e) is not for [Fe and F is special]
Properties and the limit view

• Is *bearing X to F* a property? If so looks like there are some properties that suffice for experience

• In response let X be syncategorematic
  – A way of instantiation
  – An operator
  – A binary predicate of the ideology
Limit & SP & the test case

• Recall: being a case of Rly seeing c’s (monadic) redness
• On limit view this property can be characteristic of the manner of being experiential of an event that has it
• On certain implementations of SP view, maybe not: my inverted duplicate lacks it, so SP might ban it on grounds of indiscriminability or some such
ZOMBIES AND THE LIMIT VIEW
An illustration

• Zombies:
  – Familiarly, guys who are duplicates of us in all respects but experience, which they lack
• Let’s assume a qualia theory
• This is a special property view
• Then what is typically found to be a zombie is a guy who is a physical duplicate but who lacks qualia
• Mutatis for intentional/Edenic consciousness
Advances in zombie theory

• The limit view separates experientiality from any possible properties of events

• Accordingly if there are qualia, there are two kinds of zombies:
  – Weak zombies: physical + qualia duplicates without X
  – Strong zombies: physical duplicates without qualia or X

• Mutatis for intentional/Edenic consciousness
Why believe in weak zbs?

• An argument the limit theorist could give:
  – Some properties are revealed as experiential
  – Anything revealed is nonphysical
  – Hence some nonphysical properties are experiential
  – Strip X off these and you get a weak zombie
“Weak zombies are hard to imagine”

• Some imaginative aids
• Someone could accept either of the following, if so he believes in weak zombies
  – Edenic trees make edenic sounds and have edenic colors without any relevant experience
  – Qualia are objective but experience is subjective; accordingly on A-theory of perspective, everyone else is a weak zombie
THE CASE FOR THE LIMIT VIEW
In favor of the limit view

- For <*, None>: transparency
- For <All, None>: no principled place to draw the line
Transparency

• Consciousness or experience, they say, is transparent
• A natural interpretation: experience itself only comes in one variety
• Any other differences between facts about experience are due to facts not about experience
Transparency and special properties

• On special property views, there’s more than one variety of “experience itself”
• Qred is one sort, Qblue another sort
• On such views, experience is not transparent
Transparency and limit theory

• On such views there is only one variety of consciousness itself
• Namely X
• Indeed if X is syncategorematic experience isn’t anything
• So limit theory secures transparency
• Of course so does <Some, None> theory
Other interpretations of transparency

• Phenomenal noise/double vision/other intrinsic aspect of the visual system looks to be on surfaces of objects/is hard to focus on
  – No it doesn’t
  – Not a general claim about consciousness

• To find out about consciousness we do x
  – Literal transparency has to do with how something *is*, not with our responses to it
Summary

• Argued for <*, None>
• Limit view = <All, None>
• Now will argue if <*, None>, <All, None>
• General concern about alternatives: hard to see where to draw the boundary
Types of proposal

• Intrinsic: in terms of the natures of the properties
• Response-dependent: in terms of some psychological or epistemic response to the properties
Intrinsic

• Must be qualitative
  – But intentional and acquaintance-involving properties aren’t qualitative

• Can’t be physical
  – Why not? Granting that some X-relata are nonphysical, why must all of them be?
Response-dependent

• Must be revealable
• This could motivate the non-physical requirement
• After all plausibly no physical properties are revealed to *us*. 
Concern

• To whom?
• Surely not to the subject (dogs etc)
• Better: to some idealized sympathizer
• But why suppose physical properties of events couldn’t be revealed to God?