

Love in the time of cholera

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1 Does perception have content?

David Lewis thought so. In his view, ‘someone sees if and only if the scene before his eyes causes matching visual experience’, where ‘visual experience has informational content about the scene before the eyes, and it matches the scene to the extent that its content is correct’.¹ ‘Visual experience’? Lewis presupposes that this is a sort of state that ‘goes on in the brain’ (Lewis 1980, 239). And he states that ‘the content of the experience is, roughly, the content of the belief it tends to produce’—more precisely, ‘only if a certain belief would be produced in almost every case may we take its content as part of the content of the visual experience’ (240).

To see the relevance of these views for the question of this volume, let us generalize. *Seeing* is a kind of ‘perceiving’ or ‘perception’: other kinds include, at least, *hearing*, *feeling*, *smelling*, and *tasting*. *Visually experiencing*—perhaps—is a kind of ‘sensorily experiencing’: if so, other kinds include, at least, *auditorily experiencing*, *tactually experiencing*, *olfactorily experiencing*, and

gustatorily experiencing. A *scene before the eyes* is, perhaps, a kind of ‘perceptual surround’: if so, other kinds include, at least, the *sounds around the ears*, the *impingements in and on the body*, the *aromas drawn in through the nose*, and the *flavors in the mouth*.

So Lewis thinks that for Sam to be in an environmental state of perceiving is for her to be in a brain state of sensorily experiencing which is caused by her perceptual surround, and the content of which—the content of the belief caused by almost every case of which—is correct. The brain state state has content. The brain state is a part of the environmental state. So the environmental state of perceiving has content ‘derivatively’ by having a part, the brain state of sensorily experiencing, which has content ‘more directly’. So says Lewis.

My story is a mixture of agreement and disagreement with Lewis’s. Lewis is right to think that perceiving involves causal impingement by the perceptual surround on the organism. And he is right to think that ‘perceptual experience’ has content (or, I should say, there is content to the phenomenon coming closest to deserving that vexed name). But he is wrong to think that ‘percep-

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¹Actually, he thinks the biconditional is ‘not far wrong’. First, *causal chains come cheap*: an intricately refined replacement for ‘causes’ is required to secure sufficiency—the ‘veridical hallucination’ of the title is a case Lewis takes to show this. Second, *eyes* are not required: rather, only some sort of ‘optical transducer’—as, Lewis thinks, is shown by the ‘prosthetic vision’ of the title. Our complaints about Lewis’s view will target issues unaffected by these complications, so that ascribing to him the cruder formulation in the body text buys simplicity without the cost of significant misdirection.

tual experience' is a *part* of perception: the relationship of these two is entirely different, in a way incompatible with even the *indirect* assignment of content to perception. And he is wrong to think it at all helpful to speak of 'perceptual experience' using efficient-causal idioms.

Now in slightly more detail.

- *The point of agreement*

Perception is something along the lines of a certain baseline of organismal sensitivity to the perceptual surround. It makes sense to use 'efficient-causal' idioms in discussing perception. And, indeed, the ordinary case of perception surely does involve something like 'standard-causation' of a neural state by a perceptual surround.

There is something that comes close to deserving the name 'perceptual experience'. There is a certain aspect of the stream of consciousness which stands in an intimate relation to perception. That aspect of the stream of consciousness has content. It must, because it rationalizes beliefs—and rationalization requires content (Lewis 1994).

- *The first point of disagreement*

Aspects of the stream of consciousness are not states or processes 'down there' in the 'objective world'. Rather, my stream of consciousness is something more like a window past which aspects of the objective world pass.²

If we think of the objective world as, so to speak, 'lashed together in an efficient-causal nexus', then we might imagine that the sort of explanation applying to the stream of consciousness is not efficient-causal. Aspects of the stream of

consciousness are explicable, if at all, *rationalized* by other aspects of the stream of consciousness.

If perception is part of the efficient-causal nexus but the stream of consciousness is not, then it sows confusion to think of perception as 'psychological': we should think of it, rather, as *organismal* or *organismo-environmental* or *ecological*. If perception is nonpsychological, then, because only the psychological can have content,³ perception doesn't have content. And conversely, because 'perceptual experience' is most certainly psychological, and has content, 'perceptual experience' can't be *part* of perception.

- *The second point of disagreement*

Explaining the nature of the relationship between consciousness and perception requires abandoning the Carnapian notion of 'perceptual experience' in favor of a notion with a greater degree of phenomenological veracity.

Namely, *attention*. Attention is, at the very least, the targeting of aspects of the perceptual surround for inclusion within the stream of consciousness. Recast in this idiom, the nature of the relation between perception and 'perceptual experience'—ahem, *attention*—springs into focus. Attention is not a *part* of perception. Rather, perception *supplies* and *constrains* attention.

- *The third point of disagreement*

While attention has content, it cannot fail to 'match' the perceptual surround—cannot fail to be 'correct'. And moreover, the content is not the 'narrow' sort embraced by Lewis (Lewis 1994). When an aspect of the perceptual surround

²For more on this, see Hellie 2013.

³Well, can only have 'original' content, as against the 'derived' content of written messages, and as against the 'contentful stance' we sometimes take toward bread-baking machines.

is targeted by attention, it is *present within* the stream of consciousness: the stream of consciousness is characterized by a distinctively perceptual sort of assurance, or certainty, of the existence of the target—has the content, ‘coded’ in a distinctive way, that the target exists. And, more alluringly still, the ‘nature’ of the target is simply ‘revealed’, in a way that leaves (at a certain level) no room for doubt about what it is like.⁴ While content in general is used to model error and ignorance, any mistakes or uncertainty I may make are ‘wrapped around’ a point of certainty about a minor but substantial matter: my certainty that *this exists as such*. This certainty is the condition I am in thanks to having a certain target of attention.

Presentation within attention therefore provides me with my ‘cognitive toehold’ on reality: it is what distinguishes conscious life from a ‘frictionless spinning in the void’.

The remainder of this chapter will flesh out this story in detail.

Doing so, regrettably, will require some terminological innovation. For the ordinary notion of *perception* is too protean to be useful in philosophical theory, while the philosopher’s notion of *experience* carries doctrinal baggage I reject. So the broad phenomenon of the chapter will be labeled *sensory consciousness* (sometimes ‘sensorimotor consciousness’), by which we will mean, roughly, those aspects of a creature’s conscious life that pertain to its ‘sense-perceptual’ or ‘sensorimotor’ condition.

These sensory aspects of consciousness are phenomenologically distinctive: have a character that is immediately striking upon first-person contemplation of what it is like to undergo them. This distinctive character is often thought to involve a sort of *presentation* within sensorimotor consciousness of ingredients of the ob-

jective world (Martin 2004): things around one; one’s own body; the motor activity of one’s body in relation to the things around one.

If we set sensory consciousness in its broader phenomenological context, it is this presentational aspect that uniquely qualifies sensorimotor consciousness to perform a variety of ‘rational-psychological’ duties: duties of a semantic, epistemological, or praxeological sort. These include: advancing ingredients of the objective world as topics for thought and talk (Snowdon 1992); opening a source of evidence about the objective world (Hellie 2011); providing a sink for agency in regard to the objective world. So if conscious life in the objective world makes any sense, the presentational capacities of sensory consciousness must be secure.

Unfortunately, philosophical challenges to presentation remove this security. For it can seem that what it is like for one can remain fixed over an interval during which consciousness becomes ‘disengaged’ from the objective world (Valberg 1992); and it can seem that the subject’s contribution to what sensory consciousness is like threatens to overwhelm any contribution of what is allegedly presented (Hellie 2010).

This chapter will follow out this dialectic. We turn immediately to a theory of the structure of sensory consciousness; the phenomenon of presentation can be clearly located within this structure. We then defend the rational-psychological necessity of presentation. We conclude with discussion of these philosophical challenges to the possibility of presentation. A crucial aspect of the discussion will be recognition of the *deep nonobjectivity* of consciousness, a notion expanded upon in the technical appendix.

⁴Attention is in this way therefore similar to the ‘relational states’ proposed by a number of contemporary direct realists—although many of these theorists paint a view incompatible with the ascription of content.

2 Presentation within sensory consciousness

The theory of sensory consciousness used in this chapter is, in outline, the following. At each moment of a creature's life, the creature and its environment are aspects of a particular extremely rich and intricate course of 'sensorimotor' interaction. This sensorimotor process is 'objective': neither it nor any of its aspects is essentially a part of the creature's 'subjective' conscious life; it can be fully understood from the 'third-person' point of view. Still, at each (waking) moment of the creature's life, various aspects of the sensorimotor state are 'drawn up within' conscious life: are presented (or *given*) within the creature's conscious picture of the world as the momentary 'anchor' dropped by the objective world within conscious life. This drawing up/presentation/giveness of a particular is what we colloquially call *attention to* that particular.

We now expand on six points of detail. The first concerns our talk of 'objective things' and 'the objective world'. The chapter adopts this manner of speaking for economy and vividness of expression; the subjective/objective distinction applies more literally to *modes of presentation* (a more rigorous statement of this idea is found in the technical appendix). To illustrate. When Mo studies a creature—such as Sam—as a physiological system (or as an abstraction from an ecological system), Mo's manner of understanding is 'third-person': is attained within a perspective *on* Sam. By contrast, Sam herself, in her conscious life, understands herself in a manner that is 'first-person': is attained within a perspective *from* Sam—within her conscious life (Harman 1990a). The specific character of a certain episode of Sam's understanding of the latter sort is the specific way Sam's conscious life, or existence, or being, is *for* her: is 'what it is like to be Sam'. Mo, like every creature distinct from Sam, cannot adopt the very perspective from Sam: after all, doing so requires *being* Sam. And yet, a *phe-*

nomenological manner of understanding Sam—a 'knowledge of what it is like' for Sam—is not restricted to Sam. Through *sympathy*—through temporarily making himself (as a creature) more like Sam (as a creature)—Mo's own temporary first-person understanding becomes more like Sam's; Mo attains a 'second-person' perspective in which he attains some knowledge of what it is like to be Sam (Heal 2003).

The second point concerns the general structure of the sensorimotor state. The sensory, recall, is *objective*: accordingly, a theory of its structure should not involve phenomenological notions ('represents', 'aware', 'attention', 'looks'); and while phenomenological appeals are legitimate in the 'context of discovery', they should be treated with great delicacy in the 'context of justification'. Research keeping these points firmly in mind (Gibson 1979, Thompson 2007, Matthen 2005, Noë 2006) coalesces around a vision of an *ecological process*: a 'feedback loop' from which the creature (Sam) and her environment are not genuinely dissociable, and of which no momentary snapshot can be understood outside of its enduring context. Much of the literature resists the 'broad' and 'holistic' aspects of this vision: each sensory state is dissociated from the broader process; creature is dissociated from environment; motor 'output' is dissociated from sensory 'input'. Within these parameters, the sensory is sometimes treated as a relation, often a relation of 'awareness' (Moore 1903): perhaps to the environment (Campbell 2002); perhaps to 'internal sense-data' (Russell 1910–11). But the sensory might also be treated as monadic (Ducasse 1942): perhaps as a physiological condition of 'irritation' (Quine 1960); perhaps as a semantic condition of 'representation' (Harman 1990b). Perhaps resistance to the ecological vision sometimes stems from the phenomenological considerations to be discussed in section 4. But because the sensory is objective, establishing the pertinence to it of those considerations would require extensive elaboration.

The third point concerns the ‘constituency’ of the sensorimotor state: that which can be found in it, or abstracted from it. Among the sensorimotor state’s central jobs is that of providing the subject-matter for ordinary judgements of *perception* and *sensation* (along with *motor behavior*). So if we think Sam sees a truck or a dog or a book or a rainbow or a mirror image, smells an aroma of chili, or suffers a pain in her shoulder or a spell of double vision—then Sam’s sensorimotor state should accordingly embed her in some sort of *visual* condition in regard to truck or dog or book; or in regard to ‘rainbow-relevant phenomena’; or in regard to the mirror and what it reflects; and should embed her in an *olfactory* condition in regard to some ‘chili-scent-waft’ phenomenon; and should locate ‘painfulness’ somehow in her shoulder; and should somehow qualify her visual condition with some sort of ‘doubledness’ somehow in her eyes and brain. Conversely, what Sam does not perceive or sense—the remote, the tiny, the subtle, the obscured, the occluded—should in general be absent from her sensorimotor state. Judgements of what is perceived or sensed are often highly indeterminate; a full theory of sensorimotor processes should reflect and explain that. Resolving the vexation stemming from such phenomena as rainbows, mirrors, and double vision will require delicate balancing of methodological and ontological issues. Again, care should be taken to avoid phenomenological notions like the looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels of things; and, conversely, to avoid contaminating solutions to the phenomenological puzzle of ‘distinguishing the senses’ (Grice 1962) with considerations more appropriate to the objective characterization of sensorimotor processes.

Fourth, we elaborate the notion of ‘presentation’. To fix ideas, stare at this page: *there it is*. When the page is, in this way, *there*, we shall say it is ‘present within conscious life’ (‘present’, ‘presented’). Philosophical traditions have labeled this phenomenon in various ways: the page is ‘up against you’, ‘given’, ‘apprehended

in intuition’. That this phenomenon of presentation is at least *prima facie* genuine is widely acknowledged (Price 1932/1950, Valberg 1992, Hellie 2011); indeed, its first-blush allure is arguably the central source of dialectical tension in the analytic philosophy of perception (Martin 2000). Presentation is, moreover, of philosophical *interest* because if it is genuine, it would involve an incursion or intrusion of the objective within the nonobjective—of ‘brute’ nonconscious matter within conscious life. Presentation does not seem to be restricted to *objects*, in a strict sense: the *features* of objects (the white of the page) are candidates, as are *events* (the utterance of a sentence; the throbbing of a pain), as are courses of motor activity; and as are, perhaps, whatever smells or rainbows may be.

Fifth, we elaborate the connections between *attention* and our other notions. Attention and presentation are linked: what is (or are) present is exactly what is (or are) the target of attention. The concept of attention is phenomenological in nature: known and understood ultimately from within conscious life as the visage of however one comports oneself such that something becomes present. Nevertheless, attention involves an admixture of the objective: what is a candidate target of Sam’s attention is exhausted by what is a constituent of her sensorimotor state. Still, while the sensorimotor state is objective, that one turns attention on some aspect of it is not. Attention is therefore the ‘porthole’ in conscious life through which the objective world drops its anchor; or perhaps the ‘lashings’ with which conscious life stays moored to the objective world. (Perhaps there is some objective ‘realization’ of attention: if so, the risk of terminological confusion would be reduced by calling it ‘centering’ or ‘tracking’.)

And sixth and finally, we remark on a range of phenomenological features of attention. Ordinary discourse recognizes looking at *x*, feeling *x*, tasting *x*, smelling *x*, and listening to *x*; these are all varieties of targeting attention on *x*. Each of these varieties

itself doubtless comes in still more determinate varieties: for example, staring and luxuriating. Typically we find attention used in conscious life as an inextricable part of an activity. Consider reading, chasing down a fly ball, assembling a ship in a bottle, dancing, conversing, searching for one's keys, analyzing a piece of music or a wine: one performs such an activity *attentively* just when one turns attention to those aspects of the sensorimotor process in which the action unfolds within the objective world. What it is like is not exhausted by *what* is the target of attention: intense focus on a tomato and a passing glance differ phenomenologically. Moreover, which activity one is performing attentively seems to make a distinctive phenomenological contribution: an artist making a final survey of a painting and a gallery visitor studying that painting might glance over the very same regions of the painting, but what it is like for them in doing so would differ dramatically.

To summarize. (A) What it is like for Sam—the distinctive character of her conscious life—is a nonobjective matter. (B) Aspects of what it is like for her include (but are not exhausted by) every fact concerning what is present within conscious life. (C) An entity x is present within Sam's conscious life (and *that* x is so present is part of what it is like for her) at a moment just if Sam then targets x with attention; and (D1) if she does target x with attention, x is a constituent of Sam's sensorimotor state. But not conversely: (D2) most constituents of Sam's sensorimotor state are not targets of attention. While (E1) Sam's sensorimotor state is composed in part of what she perceives or senses, (E2) much remains beyond the scope of Sam's sensorimotor state. Finally, (F) Sam's sensorimotor state is an ingredient of the objective world, so that its constituency is an objective matter.

Distinguishing the objective phenomenon of the sensorimotor from the nonobjective phenomenon of conscious life permits an attractive description of the following sort of case:

Fred's copy of *Being and Time*: it is on his bookcase

somewhere. But where? Fred combs every inch of the bookcase furiously, repeatedly, unsuccessfully. His frustration mounts. Until, at last—*there it is*. Right in front of Fred's nose the whole time, he saw it but did not notice it—a source of great consternation.

Recent literature (Block 2011) draws a conundrum from the following assumptions. (1) Fred sees whatever is right in front of his nose; (2) if Fred sees something right in front of his nose, that the thing indeed is right in front of his nose is part of what it is like for him; (3) what it is like for Fred explains what Fred thinks and does.

The conundrum is drawn out as follows. *Being and Time* is right in front of Fred's nose; so by (1), he sees it; so by (2), that *Being and Time* is right in front of his nose is part of what it is like for Fred; so by (3), what Fred thinks and does is made sense of by the fact that part of what it is like for him is that *Being and Time* is right in front of his nose. But it isn't: if that is part of what it is like for Fred, he should reach out and grab the book rather than continuing the search.

The literature presents a choice between poverty and excessive wealth: some deny (1), concluding that what we see is impoverished relative to what we think we see; others deny (3), concluding that what it is like for one is enriched relative to what we think it is like for one. But the poverty response loses the distinction between Fred's case and a search for something simply unseen: the latter should not provoke the consternation Fred displays in the example. And the wealth response severs the evident connection between consciousness and rationality: if the location of *Being and Time* is within Fred's conscious life and yet he acts in a way that (we would have thought) makes no sense in light of that, the rational role of consciousness is cast into obscurity.

The theory of this section allows the following story. By (3), the rationality of Fred's search depends on what it is like for him.

By (B), it makes sense to assume that Fred’s search is rational just if *Being and Time* is not present within conscious life. By (C), the search is rational just until Fred’s attention alights on the book. By (D1), ending the search is only rational if the book is an aspect of Fred’s sensorimotor state. So, by (E1), at least when the search ends, Fred sees the book; but moreover, continuing the search can be rational even if the book is an aspect of Fred’s sensorimotor state: after all, (D2) means that even if attention has not alit on the book, the book can nonetheless be an aspect Fred’s sensorimotor state and therefore (E1) seen—preserving consistency with (1). Wrapping up, (E2) preserves the consternation-free case in which *Being and Time* is at home.

So, by asserting both (D1) and (D2), we drive a wedge between the targets of attention (and onward to presence, what it is like, and rationality) and the constituents of the sensorimotor state (and onward to what is seen)—and are therefore in a position to reject (2).

But how do we have the right to (D1) and (D2) simultaneously? The literature embeds a widespread presupposition that consciousness is *objective*, involving ‘subjects of experience’ instancing ‘sense-perceptual qualia’—where states of such instancing are rather like narrow and monadic sensory states. (Block 1995, Chalmers 2010). But this picture makes (D1) a trivial consequence of (B) and (C), while engendering a very strong tension among (B), (C), and (D2): (B) and (C) mean that all qualia are targets of attention; but (D2) means that some qualia are not targets of attention. The ‘higher-order’ manoeuvre (Rosenthal 2005) of making consciousness into *attended* qualia, where attention is an objective propositional attitude, restores the significance of (D1) and the coherence of (D2); but the cost is to raise the vexing question of how an objective propositional attitude and qualia, neither by itself an article of consciousness, can collectively amount to consciousness.

With (F), our theory acknowledges the objectivity of the sensory. But with (A), it rejects the objectivity of consciousness—and is therefore compatible with neither the qualia nor the ‘higher-order’ approach. The right to (D1) and (D2) is secured by abandoning the objectivity of consciousness.

3 The importance of presentation

Attention to a tomato drops the tomato as an anchor of the objective world within Sam’s conscious life. To appropriate John McDowell’s vivid metaphor (McDowell 1994), it is this anchoring that distinguishes conscious life from a ‘frictionless spinning in the void’. As discussed above, a central aim of the philosophy of perception has long been to secure the apparent friction against the concerns to be discussed in section 4. In this section, we discuss an explanation of why presentation is worth the bother.

In a nutshell: without presentation, rational psychology—and probably conscious life—in an objective world would be impossible. In outline, a sort of ‘transcendental argument’: (1) Rational psychology is about *picture of the world* and *stock of actions*, both of them grasped through understanding how they evolve intelligibly (Stalnaker 1984, Anscombe 1963). In particular, (2) one’s picture of the world evolves through the accumulation of evidence (Lewis 1973), while one’s stock of actions evolves through the discharging of plans (Bratman 2000); where, still more specifically (in a way apparently required by embodiment), (3) one accumulates evidence by gradually making more precise one’s certainties about the objective world as regards the evolving sensorimotor processes of a certain creature and discharges one’s plans by contouring those same sensorimotor process. So unless the link in (3) is intelligible, (RD) our understanding of rational psychology is thoroughly ‘semantically defective’. But intelligibility is a phenomenological notion, in at least the weak sense that

(4W) whether someone evolves intelligibly over an interval is determined by what it is like to be them over the interval; and perhaps also in the strong sense that (4S) there is nothing to what it is like beyond that which is relevant to intelligibility. So, by (4W), unless (L) some aspect of what it is like makes the link in (3) intelligible, (RD) follows; and perhaps by (4S), unless (L), (CD) our understanding of consciousness is also thoroughgoingly semantically defective. But (RD) is perilously close to the baffling claim that there are no truths of rational psychology, and (CD) is perilously close to the absurd claim that there are no truths about consciousness. Fortunately, we can avoid (RD) and (CD), for (5) presentation within conscious life can, and can alone, suffice for (L)—can be the aspect of what it is like that makes the link in (3) intelligible.

Now in a bit more detail. Principles (1) and (2) are ancient framework doctrines best explored more deeply in another forum. Principle (3) is obvious: for each of us, there is a creature about which we care in a manner that is absolutely *sui generis*, the death of which would extinguish consciousness; it is this creature's sensorimotor processes which serve as evidence source and agency sink.

Now to (4W). Intelligible evolution is one with the availability of rationalizing explanation; of answers to 'why' asked with a distinctively rationalizing spirit (Anscombe 1963). For example: suppose that Fred has leapt to his feet, and that we wonder why. An 'efficient-causal' explanation of the sort offered by physiology is not what we want: we don't know any physiology, so such an explanation would be so much gibberish to us. What we wonder, rather, is what Fred *saw in* leaping to his feet at that moment. Citing facts utterly beyond Fred's ken would therefore be of no assistance: if Fred thereby narrowly avoided being struck by a flying bottle, that would be of no explanatory force unless that he did so was part of his picture of the world. Nor would some sort of

'intentional stance'-type story in which some part of Fred's brain is treated as performing a calculation on representations (Burge 2005): an explanation offered in the course of Chomsky-type syntactic research may elucidate how it comes about that a sentence strikes one as structured in this way rather than that, but it offers no insight into what one sees in being struck by the sentence in this way rather than that (indeed, one sees nothing in doing so: one is simply so struck). Instead, what we want to know was *what it was like for Fred* in the interval during which he leapt to his feet: what his conscious picture of the world and conscious aims were such that leaping to his feet was the best action in his repertoire for achieving those aims in a world like that. If we are told that, in Fred's view, the Mayor had just entered the room, that Fred seeks always to obey protocol, and that Fred's conception of how to do obey protocol when a high political figure enters a room calls for leaping to one's feet, this gives us a sense of what it was like for Fred; and we do find that if this is what it was like for us, we too would leap to our feet. This may not be what it was like for us: we think it wasn't the mayor, are not especially concerned to obey protocol regarding this mayor, and think the protocol for mayors doesn't require leaping to one's feet anyway. So that we did not leap to our feet was overdetermined. Nevertheless, when we sympathize with Fred, we understand why *he* did so.

Now, somewhat more speculatively, to (4S). This principle is in the spirit of, and inherits the plausibility of, the widely discussed doctrine of 'representationalism' (Harman 1990b, Chalmers 2004). Separated from its focus on exclusively *sensory* consciousness and its commitment to objective 'phenomenal properties' as characteristic of conscious life, we are left with the reasonably salutary doctrine that what it is like for one is just what (for one) the world is like—that conscious life involves no 'subjective qualities', does not outstrip one's picture of the world. A still more salutary doctrine would reflect the practical side to conscious life;

but if so, we would be left with the view that all there is to know about what it is like is what the objective world is like and what is to be done in it. (This leaves room for presentation: the presence of something objective is not a kind of subjective quality.)

Finally to (5). What is presented is, and is phenomenologically manifest as, singled out as certain to be part of the objective world. Paraphrasing a famous passage by Price (1932/1950, 3): if one is presented with a certain aspect of a sensorimotor state, then—while one may be uncertain about the exact nature of that aspect, or about the broader objective world ‘wrapped around’ the aspect—one’s conscious picture of the world displays certainty that the aspect is an ingredient of the objective world and that the aspect is singled out as present within conscious life. This phenomenologically manifest certainty simply is the accumulation of evidence; grounded in presentation, this certainty faces no further demand for justification. And while explaining the credibility of discharging plans on a single objective sensorimotor process would be a more subtle matter, the manifest singling out of such a process may at least serve as a toehold. We see a way forward on the links in (3).

Conversely, without presentation, these links become unintelligible. There are two alternatives to the relevant sort of privileging of a single particular: the privileging of many things; the privileging of nothing. For Sam’s conscious life to privilege *many* objective particulars would be for Sam to be uncertain about which location in the objective world is hers (creature Sam now? creature s' then? creature s'' at some other moment?) for conscious life to leave it open which of many candidate positions Sam occupies (our ordinary predicament, according to Lewis (1979)). This would be phenomenologically distinct from Sam’s actual condition just if the positions are objectively discriminable. So suppose that creature Sam focuses on red and creature s'' focuses on green. By the hypothesis, Sam’s conscious life involves the presentation

of both the former focus on red and the latter focus on green. But the data is that Sam’s evidence about the objective world records only what happens to creature Sam. So, phenomenologically, it is as if the presentations of creature s' have been thrown out, and only the presentations of creature Sam are recorded in the picture of the objective world. That would seem to be an imposition of an alien intelligence: a decision that makes no sense in light of the multiplicity of presentations. Similarly, for Sam’s plans to discharge only in the creature Sam would seem to make no sense in light of the multiplicity of presentation. Why go all in with *this* creature when she might be *that* creature? Or why not use *both* bodies? Again, this would seem to be an imposition of an alien consciousness, would not make sense.

At the other pole, for Sam’s conscious life to privilege *no* objective particular would be for Sam to be forever ignorant about which location in the objective world is hers (the situation of the ‘two gods’ in Lewis 1979). Sam’s objective evidence would, she would recognize, update in accord with the peregrinations of creature Sam; and Sam’s plans would, she would recognize, discharge in a way mirrored exactly by the motor behavior of creature Sam. Evidence would come out of nowhere; plans would discharge into nothing. Sam would find herself simply ‘saddled’ with the evidence, would find her plans simply ‘falling away’: nothing in conscious life would be present to make sense of all this coming and going. It would be cold comfort to superadd the certainty that some creature is, bizarrely, comporting itself exactly as if a source of Sam’s evidence and sink for her agency.

4 Challenges to presentation

4.1 Disengagement

In cases of ‘illusion’ and ‘hallucination’, one does not recognize that one has become somehow ‘out of touch’ with one’s environment. Such cases have been widely thought to demonstrate the impossibility of presentation, on grounds like the following (Martin 2004):

(1) If anything is ever presented, what it is (perhaps in particular, perhaps in kind) is then part of the character of conscious life. (2) For any course of ordinary waking life, one could dream in such a way that what the course of dreaming is like is no different from what the course of ordinary waking life is like. Of course (3) the character of conscious life is just exhausted by what it is like, so that (appealing to (2)) (4) the conscious lives of the ordinary subject and the dreamer do not differ in character. And if so (appealing to (1)), (5) whatever is presented to either is presented to both. But surely (6) nothing (either in particular or in kind) need be presented to both subjects. And if not (appealing to (5)), (7) nothing is presented to either.

The premisses are (1)–(3) and (6). We have defended (1) and rejected (7) in the previous section, and advocated (3) in the first section. Little light would emanate from a challenge to the validity of the argument. So we face a choice of challenging (2) and challenging (6).

Challenging (6) is the way of Russell (1910–11): even if nothing familiar is presented to both, perhaps something *unfamiliar* is—an ‘internal’ sort of ‘sense-datum’. A first problem. The unfamiliarity of these internal sense-data is a perpetual source of widespread philosophical distaste for this approach. This distaste

is a sure sign that we think that what is presented in ordinary waking life is almost always something ‘external’; so Russell’s view means that, in ordinary waking life (and also when we are taken in by a dream), we are almost always mistaken about what is presented. The alternative this chapter will press predicts that mistake is (strictly more) rare. In this respect, Russell’s approach is strictly worse. This leads to a second problem: the stating of the approach undermines its own solution; so the approach embeds a sort of ‘pragmatic contradiction’. For if we come to understand what sense-data are, we will find it easy enough to concoct a scenario in which what it is like is preserved while the availability of sense-data is scrambled—destroying the solution. Any difficulty imagining such a scenario is rooted in our cluelessness about what sense-data are. But that is also bad: for it is cluelessness about what the theory says. This suggests a third, and fundamental, problem. Russell’s proposed solution is, ultimately, utterly superficial: the dialectical tension is rooted not in details of the constitution of the objective world, but rather in our capacity to dissociate the first- and third-person perspectives on our own lives. (From the first-person point of view, Sam regards herself as seeing an anteater; when she later learns she was only dreaming, her sense of the situation from the third-person no longer coheres with her sense from the first-person; bringing this sense into the ‘here and now’, one may temporarily adopt an alienated perspective regarding one’s ordinary view as mistaken.) Pushed to its limit, this strategy leads to Cartesian skeptical hypotheses: and presumably an evil genius could blast out of the picture any sense-data (or other unfamiliar objective things) that might have been lying around.

So we need an alternative to (2). Fortunately, the alternative is obvious (Snowdon 1980/1, Martin 2004, Hellie 2011): when one is taken in by a dream of looking at a tomato, one *mistakenly thinks* that one is looking at a tomato; and so because *looking at a tomato* is the sort of activity that can be part of what it is like for one, one

therein *mistakenly thinks* that part of what it is like for one is that one is looking at a tomato. If one is mistaken in this, then it is *no* part of what it is like for one that one is looking at a tomato. And more generally, there is *no* course of ordinary waking life for which there is a dream such that what they are like is the same (though one is always at risk of being taken in).

One might well wonder what it could possibly be to be mistaken about what it is like. The apparatus of the previous sections sheds light on the phenomenon; we will develop the position in the course of the following dialogue with a skeptic about such mistakes ('S' for skeptic; 'U' for us):

- S. One can't be mistaken about what it is like for one: one always knows exactly that it is just like *this*.
- U. Even if so, this infallible but inarticulate sense for what it is like is irrelevant. For (2) is about cross-comparisons; so unless (2) begs the question, these must involve some 'interpretive grain' mixed in with the bare 'this'. Where there is interpretation, there is misinterpretation. And where there is misinterpretation, there is a mistaken picture of the world.
- S. What is the mistake? (And what is it like when we don't make the mistake?)
- U. The literature focuses too extensively on **good** cases in which one knows oneself to be seeing and **bad** cases in which one is taken in by hallucination. But surely one can believe oneself to be hallucinating, as during lucid dreaming (Hellie 2011): and once hallucination and belief that one is seeing are prised apart, it becomes clear that one might mistakenly believe waking life to be a dream. In addition to *good* and *bad* cases, we need therefore to recognize also

subgood cases (like good cases in involving seeing; like bad cases in involving mistake about whether one is seeing) and **suprabad** cases (like bad cases in involving hallucinating; like good cases in involving correct belief about whether one is seeing).

(What it is like when we don't make the mistake is what lucid dreaming is like.)

Having made this distinction, the mistake in the bad case is just *that one is seeing* and that therefore *the presented entity is a physical object rather than a mental figment*. But because any mental figment is presumably essentially that way and any physical object is presumably essentially that way, the bad-case judgement *this is a physical object* is counter-essential and therefore fails to draw up a coherent picture of the world. The bad case is a case of a bad, because false, presupposition:⁵ nothing in the mind is 'intrinsically bad'; badness is a Frege case, resulting from unobvious misalignment of various components of one's picture of the world.

- S. Are we allowing *picture of the world* to fix what it is like? If so, I applaud. (A) One can't be mistaken about one's picture of the world, and (B) presentation seems to have been cut out of the story—so what it is like is fixed by a trouble-free 'narrow' feature about which one can't be mistaken (compare the doctrine of 'representationalism', discussed above).
- U. (A) is mistaken. To see this, recall that David Lewis once believed that Nassau Street runs roughly (to within 10 degrees) north–south, the train runs roughly east–west, and the two are roughly parallel (Lewis 1982): his picture of the world was inconsistent. Obviously he spent some time unaware of this: when he recognized the inconsistency, straightaway it

⁵Thanks to Dominic Alford-Duguid and Michael Arsenault for making this point especially sharply.

vanished.

Why? It is in the spirit of (4S) from the previous section to think of one's own characterization of conscious life as presenting the world transparently and coherently. But the world as Lewis pictures it is not coherent. And while the second-person perspective permits a sort of scattered hopping around among three consistent fragments—but that is a nontransparent perspective. So incoherence among fragmentary pictures of the world inevitably carries with it error about one's total picture of the world.

So the picture is this: presentation of a certain sort of aspect of one's sensorimotor state brings with it conscious certainty that that aspect of that sort exists. If other aspects of one's conscious picture of the world are incompatible with the existence of that aspect, one's total conscious picture of the world is incoherent—and so, against (B), presentation is not irrelevant to what it is like. But because incoherence in one's picture of the world is unrecognizable, one makes some sort of mistake about what it is like for one.

S. But *why* does one judge, in the bad case, that the presented figment is (for example) *purple* rather than *red*? In the suprabad case, one recognizes it to be neither, but simply possessed of a certain feature *P* characteristic of some mental figments but not others. What is it about feature *P* that combines with the mistaken belief that one is seeing which misleads us into judging the figment to be purple (Speaks 2013, Logue 2013)? Internalists have a single feature to which they can appeal in rationalizing both the good and bad case judgements—what about you?

U. The discussion of (6) shows that this is a problem for ev-

eryone; what everyone should say is this. The incoherent bad-case subject has to make *some* judgement, of course. But that subject is in the incoherent position of accepting a counteressential content that this figment is a physical object; and rational psychology is paralyzed in the presence of incoherence, and therefore not up to the task of saying which thing it is. So the question is misplaced. The best we can do is attempt to enter sympathetically into the position of the other, shut off much of what we know, and think from a position of self-imposed artificial ignorance what we would do in the situation of the other. Turning a phrase from McDowell (1994) on its head: we may have wanted justification, but we will have to settle for exculpation.

4.2 The subject's contribution

If someone—Flip, for instance—is afflicted by *spectral inversion*, then what it is like for him to see a red thing is the same as what it is like for an ordinary person—Norma, for instance—to see a green thing; and vice versa; and so on around the spectrum (Shoemaker 1991). Spectral inversion is a vivid example of the sort of 'subjective contribution' to what it is like that prompted Berkeley's perplexity over a round tower that looks square from far off, over the large appearance to the mite of what we find small. It sets in motion the following aporia:

Let Flip have normal color vision for a member of his species. It would be hopelessly parochial to assert that Norma has but Flip lacks the correct view on which color this patch of grass is: the cosmopolitan recognizes that each thinks it is green; more generally, that typically everyone is right about the colors of objects.

⁶'Cool' and 'warm' are a pedagogically-convenient stand-in for whatever higher-order features we in fact find to distinguish green as we see it from red as we see it.

But while Norma thinks green is a ‘cool’ color, Flip thinks green is a ‘warm’ color.⁶ The higher-order features of ‘coolness’ and ‘warmth’ are incompatible, cannot be both possessed by a single color; so at least one of Norma and Flip is wrong. Which is it? It would be hopelessly parochial to vote for Norma: the cosmopolitan recognizes that both of them are wrong; more generally, that everyone is mistaken about the natures of the colors.

But it is within presentation with colors that we arrive at our view on the natures of the colors. Mistakes about nature are necessary falsehoods: matters about which we can only be uncertain through gross confusion. So here again we find a contra-essential error. Whichever one of them is wrong is not just mistaken: their conception of green is *semantically defective*. (Relativization—cool for us, warm for them—would only push error to the third order: at the third order, warmth and coolness are presented as ‘absolute’.)

So presentation is a source of confusion so gross as to engender semantic defectiveness. But the central theoretical role of presentation is as a source of infallible certainty about objects and their features. Once burned, twice shy: our misadventures at the higher order should undermine our confidence at the lower order—indeed, we now see that they infect what is *meant* at the lower order, rendering it unintelligible.

So nothing can fill the theoretical role of presentation: the phenomenon does not exist. But, as discussed in section 3, without presentation, it may be that there are no truths about consciousness. So if we reach this stage, consciousness vanishes.

Perhaps the time is right to revive Kant’s approach to this aporia. The second leap toward cosmopolitanism—recognition that

the structure we find in the world, we put in in the first place—is both compulsory and forbidden. Compulsory for the theorist seeking the most objective possible viewpoint. But forbidden because from that viewpoint, conscious life itself vanishes—and with it, the theorist.

The second leap toward cosmopolitanism may be one we only perform sometimes, in safe circumstances quarantined from others where it would be genuinely damaging. Why think either universal cosmopolitanism or universal parochialism is required of us? A third option is the cynical adventitious cosmopolitanism of the savvy politician: in the home province, affirming wholeheartedly local parochial biases; in the capital, as easily abandoning them in a cosmopolitan spirit of national compromise. Diachronically inconsistent; less than wholeheartedly sincere at any moment; quite possibly distasteful if not vicious. And yet life goes on.

This is the *First Critique*’s discomfiting alternation between transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Our reasoning tells us that transcendental idealism must be correct. But because what transcendental idealism means can only be grasped from a viewpoint that is unattainable if ordinary life is to continue, our desire to leap beyond empirical realism will be forever frustrated.

A Semantics for deep nonobjectivity

Think of (nonextremal) *propositions* as representing answers to questions which can be *reasonably asked* and *universally answered*. ‘Are your shoes tied’ cannot be universally answered (some rightly say yes, others no). Still, in any given circumstance, it corresponds to the question whether the addressee’s shoes are tied at the moment, a question over which disagreement requires mistake. ‘Is $2 + 2 = 17$ ’ cannot be reasonably asked, in the sense that if I know the right answer for you, I can’t make full sense

of what things would be like for you were you to give the wrong answer; and I therefore can't make full sense of what you are uncertain between if you don't answer the question. But 'are your shoes tied' can be reasonably asked: even framed, against a given context, so that it can be universally answered, I can make sense of how someone in a given context might get the wrong answer. And 'is $2 + 2 = 17$ ' can be universally answered: the correct answer for everyone is in the negative.

The full field of propositions includes all nonextremal propositions as well as two limit cases: the trivial proposition, representing the correct answer to any question which can't be reasonably asked; and the absurd proposition, representing its incorrect answer. The notion of 'the objective world' used in the main body of the paper, then, corresponds to the totality of correct answers to questions reasonably asked and universally answered; alternatively, it is the totality of correct propositions.

A question that cannot be universally answered is in one respect nonobjective: it is *situated*, with potentially varying answers for me and for you. A question that cannot be reasonably asked is in another respect nonobjective: it is *superficial*, with an answer at no distance from conscious life; whatever it concerns, its condition is not ultimately potentially elusive to reason. A question that can be reasonably asked and universally answered is *deeply objective*: its subject-matter is the structure of the brutally nonconscious, considered in isolation from any peculiarities of consciousness. Are any questions *deeply nonobjective*—on the one hand situated; but on the other hand superficial?

Yes. One such question is 'is it like this: goats eat cans.?' The question is situated. For Fred, who falsely believes that goats eat cans, the answer is affirmative. For me, it is negative. Before I learned that goats do not eat cans, the answer was also negative (but so was the answer to 'is it like this: goats do not eat cans.?', a question I now answer in the affirmative). But the question is also

superficial: because it *is* like that for Fred, I can't make sense of what things are like for him if he answers otherwise; and therefore I can't make sense of what things are like for him if he takes both answers seriously.

A sentence φ entails a sentence ψ just if whenever a *context* c affirms φ , c affirms ψ . A *proposition* P is a subset of W , 'modal space', the set of possible worlds. In a *context-sensitive propositional semantics*, a declarative sentence φ receives a propositional $\llbracket \varphi \rrbracket^c$ as its semantic value against a context c . In a *truth-conditional semantics*, affirmation is *verification*: c verifies φ ($c \vDash \varphi$) just if $w_c \in \llbracket \varphi \rrbracket^c$, for $w_c \in W$ the 'world of the context'. In a *mindset semantics*, affirmation is *support*: c supports φ ($c \Vdash \varphi$) just if $i_c \subseteq \llbracket \varphi \rrbracket^c$, for $i_c \subseteq W$ the 'information state of the context'.

A *rigidifying operator* returns an extremal proposition against c corresponding to the affirmation-value of its prejacent at c . In truth-functional semantics, the characteristic rigidifier is \mathbf{A} , the familiar 'actuality' operator, with $\llbracket \mathbf{A}\varphi \rrbracket^c = \{w : c \vDash \varphi\}$; in mindset semantics, the characteristic rigidifier is ∇ , the 'Veltman rigidifier' (Veltman 1996, Yalcin 2007), with $\llbracket \nabla\varphi \rrbracket^c = \{w : c \Vdash \varphi\}$ —with an intuitive reading along the lines of 'certainly'.

These rigidifiers exhibit inferential properties corresponding to their associated notions of affirmation. Verification is 'self-dual': $c \vDash \varphi$ just if $c \vDash \neg\neg\varphi$; but support is 'non-self-dual': sometimes both $c \Vdash \varphi$ and $c \Vdash \neg\varphi$. As a result, while \mathbf{A} interacts with the classical connectives only classically, ∇ exhibits surprising interactions with the classical connectives. In particular, both dilemma and reductio are mindset-invalid: although $\nabla\varphi \Vdash \varphi$, $\nabla\neg\varphi \nVdash \neg\varphi$ and $\varphi \vee \psi \nVdash \nabla\varphi \vee \nabla\psi$.

This makes ∇ distinctively useful in representing 'transparent certainty' (Hellie 2011). The equivalence of φ to $\nabla\varphi$ makes for transparency. And yet while truth is bivalent, certainty is *trivalent*: whenever whether- φ can be reasonably asked, it is coherent to accept any of $\nabla\varphi$, $\nabla\neg\varphi$, and $\neg\nabla\varphi \wedge \neg\nabla\neg\varphi$.

Because its being like such-and-such is a kind of transparent certainty, this in turn makes $\nabla\varphi$ distinctively useful for representing ‘it’s like this: φ ’. For φ and ‘it’s like this: φ ’ are equivalent—accepting one is accepting the other. And yet, while accepting $\neg\varphi$ requires accepting ‘it’s not like this: φ ’, the converse is not so: when consciousness is ‘grey’ regarding whether φ , one accepts ‘it’s not like this: φ ’ but does not accept $\neg\varphi$. If the context against which sentences are evaluated represents what it is like for the subject under consideration, we can then say that $c \Vdash \nabla\varphi$ just if, for that subject, it is like this: φ .

The overall picture advanced by the semantics is one on which we do not think of distinctions in consciousness as distinctions in the world (Hellie 2013). The field of propositions is one thing, the context entertaining them another: we entertain the world by entertaining propositions from a context; our entertainment of consciousness, by contrast, is nothing other than the context itself. That is all to the good, because injecting distinctions in consciousness into the world leads immediately to ‘Kaplan’s paradox’: with n worlds, there are 2^n propositions; with 2^n propositions, there are 2^n states of consciousness; with 2^n states of consciousness, if there are propositions about consciousness, there are 2^{2^n} propositions about consciousness; but because $2^{2^n} > 2^n$, that makes for more propositions about consciousness than propositions—contradiction.

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