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That Which Makes the Sensation of Blue a Mental Fact: Moore on Phenomenal Relationism

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A gift of a dollar for each article in the philosophy of perception and consciousness published since 1990 making reference, explicitly or implicitly, to Moore's discussion in the second half of Moore 1903[1] of an alleged 'transparency' and 'diaphanousness' pertaining to some aspect of perceptual experience would very likely cover the tab of a mid-priced dinner for two.[2] Moore's poetically expressed observations have captured the imagination of contemporary philosophers of perception and consciousness, and have served as the basis of much fruitful discussion in those areas.

Still, despite all the attention these observations have received, the contemporary literature lacks a close reading of the second half of Moore's paper, without which it is impossible to understand Moore's observations in the context in which they were originally expressed. It is understandable that such a close reading is lacking: the second half of Moore's paper has been rightly described by one of his most sympathetic and dedicated interpreters as 'extremely dense and opaque' (Klemke 2000: 55).[3] But despite the evident difficulties of the task, I aim here, with some trepidation, to provide the missing close reading.

The main points of my interpretation will be these. The centerpiece of the anti-idealist manoeuvrings of the second half of the paper is a *phenomenological* argument for what I will call a *relational view* of perceptual phenomenal character, on which, roughly, 'that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact' is a relation of conscious awareness, a view close to the *opposite* of the most characteristic contemporary view going under the transparency rubric.[4] The discussion of transparency and diaphanousness is a sidelight, its principal purpose to shore up the main line of argumentation against criticism; in those passages all Moore argues is that the relation of conscious awareness is *not* transparent, while acknowledging that it can seem to be.

My discussion will proceed as follows. In section 1, I will discuss some theses and elucidate some notions from the philosophy of perception and consciousness which will be central to my interpretation; having done so, I will be in a position to explain how an accurate understanding of Moore may contribute to theoretical advances in the philosophy of perception and consciousness. The next two sections contain the exegetical heart of the paper: section 2 provides an analysis of Moore's case for the relational view; section 3 attempts to explain the place of the relational view in the overall refutation of idealism. Section 4 critically

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discusses a pair of competing interpretations. Section 5 wraps things up, drawing concluding morals as to the campaigns on behalf of which Moore should and should not be enlisted.

1. Theoretical Preliminaries

I will be arguing in the next section that Moore holds a relational view of perceptual phenomenal character.[5] In this section, I will explain what I mean by this.

A core notion of consciousness is *phenomenal consciousness*. This notion can be explained as follows: for a mental episode to be phenomenally conscious, to be an *experience*, is for it to be like something for its subject.[6] If *e* is like something for its subject *s*, there is some *G* such that *e* is *G* for *s*. If so, this is an existentially quantified fact, ultimately consisting in *e*'s being, for instance, *uncomfortable*, or *pleasurable*, for *s*. When *e* is *F* for *s*, we say that the property *F*ness—*being uncomfortable*, *being pleasurable*—is among the *phenomenal characters* of *s*.[7]

Facts about phenomenal consciousness—whether an experience is phenomenally conscious, and if so, the specific way in which it is phenomenally conscious—are then in some sense dependent on facts about what experiences are like for their subjects, such as (perhaps) the fact that his experience of shooting Whittington was uncomfortable for Cheney.

Recognizing that *e*'s being *F* for *s* is a core notion of consciousness gives rise to two questions. First, what is the range of *F* such that some possible mental episode is *F* for its subject? And second, when *e* is *F* for *s*, in what further relationship among *e*, *F*ness, and *s* does this consist (if any)? I call theories that attempt to answer these questions theories of *character* and theories of *apposition*, respectively.

The relational theory I ascribe to Moore is a theory of character, according to which some phenomenal characters are relational properties. More specifically, the view is that some of the phenomenal characters of a mundane experience are properties like *being a case of awareness by a subject of an instance of Gness*—later on there will be more to be said about Moore's view on the range of *G* here.[8] Moreover, I will argue, Moore accepts this view on grounds of 'introspection'—by which I will mean ordinary first-person methods for finding out about experience.

If I am correct here, this has significant consequences for the philosophy of consciousness and the philosophy of perception. First, together with plausible supplementary premisses, it makes for a case for the relational view of phenomenal character. Assume first a moderate doctrine of first-person authority, to the effect that if some subject *s* forms the belief that his experience is phenomenally *F* on the basis of introspection it is *default reasonable* for others to believe that *s*'s experience is phenomenally *F*—that is, others are *prima facie* justified in believing this, unless they have positive grounds for rejecting it. And assume second a moderate anti-skepticism about other minds, to the effect that,

as it were, we're all roughly the same: so that if one believes that *s* has a phenomenally *F* experience in response to certain stimulation, it is default reasonable to believe that anyone else will have a roughly phenomenally *F* experience in response to that stimulation. Plausibly, if an experience is *roughly* phenomenally relational, it *is* relational—relationality doesn't really seem to admit of degrees. It follows from all this that if my Moore exegesis is correct, it is default reasonable to believe that the relational view of phenomenal character is correct—that some of the phenomenal characters of a mundane experience are, as Moore thought, properties like *being a case of awareness by a subject of an instance of Gness*.

That is a significant consequence for the philosophy of consciousness, since it is opposed to a pair of central theories of character. One of these is the broad doctrine of *representationalism* (Tye 1992; Siewert 1998; Byrne 2001; Chalmers 2004): in its most extreme version, the doctrine that every phenomenal character is a *representational property*, as this notion is understood in the contemporary philosophy of perception literature, namely as a property like *being correct as a representation of the world iff p*.[9] A central alternative to this extreme representationalism is the extreme *qualia theory*, according to which every phenomenal character is, as it were, a 'mere quality' (Putnam 1981: ch. 1). The notion of a mere quality is not easy to explain in other terms, but it can be understood perhaps by analogical extension of our ordinary notions of colours, timbres, and scents to properties that can be instanced by mental episodes (and, in any event, a precise explication of the position is not needed for present purposes); perhaps the features of being pleasurable and being uncomfortable are also mere qualities which are phenomenal characters. And, of course, in addition to these extreme views, an intermediate view is also available, on which some phenomenal characters are representational features, while others are mere qualities.

The relational view is distinct from all of these views. A relational property of awareness of something does not seem much like paradigms of 'mere quality'. (Stoljar 2004 argues that qualia are *intrinsic* properties: if so, the relational view is certainly opposed to the qualia theory.) And the relational and representational views can be seen to be distinct: if an experience is a case of awareness of an instance of *F*ness, the possession of this property by the experience requires that the instance of *F*ness which is the object of awareness exists; by contrast, if an experience is correct as a representation of the world iff *p*, the possession of this property by the experience does not impose a requirement that anything exist. So, if my interpretation of Moore is on target, we face some pressure to revise the standard menu of options in the theory of consciousness.

For a second consequence that we can reach with the aid of further plausible assumptions, consider the following principle:

Instantiation
If *e* is phenomenally *F*, *e* is *F*.

The key thought behind Instantiation is that experiences *have* their phenomenal characters—that a phenomenal character is more like a biological character than like an apparent character. Whether Instantiation is correct depends on what the true theory of apposition is: for instance, on an *inner sense* theory, for *e* to be phenomenally *F* is for *e* to be represented as *F* in its subject's inner sense; if the inner sense is fallible, then it can misrepresent experiences, in violation of Instantiation.[10]

Still, if Instantiation is correct, then it follows from the relational view of phenomenal character that any mundane experience has properties like *being a case of awareness by a subject of an instance of Gness*. But this may have far-reaching consequences. Say that an experience is *hallucinatory* iff in it, its subject is not aware of any entity in the subject's environment (such as in a dream). Plausibly—though the claim can be contested (Hellie 2007; Fish in preparation)—for any mundane experience *e* of seeing, some possible hallucinatory experience *h* shares its phenomenal character. Accordingly, by Instantiation, *h* has properties like *being a case of awareness by a subject of an instance of Gness*. But then that instance of *G*ness is not in the environment of *h*'s subject, but is rather elsewhere—perhaps by being a biological object in the subject's brain (Russell 1914), or a 'mental object' somehow in the subject's mind. By accepting that in a hallucinatory experience, a subject is aware of entities in the brain or mind, we are already far down the road to a sense-datum conception of experience. If we are to avoid a full sense-datum conception on which even in the experience *e* of seeing, the subject is similarly aware of such entities, we must find some way to maintain that the property *G* is one that can be shared by both environmental entities and entities in the brain or mind, which may ultimately be difficult to make metaphysical sense of.[11]

2. Toward the Relational View

In this section, I will describe the course of Moore's argumentation for the relational view. I begin by clarifying what I take Moore's analysandum to be: Moore is concerned to explain the nature of the phenomenal character of a certain sort of experience, which he calls 'the sensation of blue'. I then discuss Moore's preliminary remarks, in which he locates two distinct parts or constituents of this phenomenal character, which he calls 'consciousness' and 'blue'. Moore sets his case for the relational view in the context of a case against two competitors, which I call the *identity* and *content* views: on the former, the phenomenal character of the sensation of blue is just what Moore calls 'blue'; on the latter, it is—roughly—an intrinsic property involving but distinct from 'blue'. I explain sequentially how I think each of these views is supposed to work, as well as Moore's case against them. I then discuss Moore's case for his positive view. Along the way, I interpret his discussion of 'diaphanousness' against the context of the discussion of the content and relation views. In the next section, I discuss the place of the relational view in the attempted refutation of idealism.

2.1. The Phenomenal Character of Sensations of Blue

The question Moore announces his intention to address is the 'uninteresting and apparently irrelevant question ''What is a sensation or idea?''' (444), though he discusses 'ideas' in the remainder only in passing, focusing most centrally on sensations. The question is not entirely clear, so I will zero in on what I take Moore to really be worrying about. Moore's 'sensations' are evidently particular episodes of sensing, perhaps events. Perhaps Moore's sensations are just our (token) perceptual experiences; there is room to question this identification,[12] but, since whether it is correct is not relevant for present purposes, I will write as if it is correct.

Moore's sensations are supposed to be psychological phenomena. After all, Moore's dispute with the idealist is over what is to be taken to be an 'inseparable aspect of my experience' 'whenever I have a [. . .] sensation' (451); since Moore's idealist also believes that the 'universe [. . .] is *spiritual* [. . .], *conscious* [. . .], intelligent [. . .], purposeful' (433), the former dispute would have no bearing on the latter claim if sensations were understood purely nonpsychologically, as, for instance, retinal irritations. More specifically, sensations are taken to be *conscious* mental particulars, rather than, say, subpersonal events in early visual processing: Moore is explicit that the 'common element' in all sensations is 'consciousness' (444).

Moore is clearly concerned with *features* of sensations, and with the distinctions among these features, rather than with residual metaphysical questions about *particular* sensations—say, with the grounds of their distinctness from other particular sensations. After all, he writes generically of *the* sensation of blue and *the* sensation of green, and is concerned with how instances of the former type differ from instances of the latter type, rather than with how instances of the former type are distinguished from one another.

Finally, the features with which Moore is concerned are those about which evidence can be acquired through armchair reflection, phenomenological study, or 'introspection': he asserts that 'We all know that the sensation of blue differs from that of green' (444), and argues for a specific claim about the natures of all sensations of blue on the grounds that his 'introspection enables him to decide' (450) that it is true.

So Moore is concerned with the natures of properties ostensibly revealed by phenomenological study to hold of experiences. Using contemporary terminology, Moore seems to be concerned with phenomenal characters, in the sense characterized in section 1. In order to conclusively establish that the properties Moore is concerned with are phenomenal characters in this sense, it would need to be shown that an experience is *F* for its subject iff phenomenological study seems to reveal its *F*ness.

Both directions of the biconditional can be questioned. Plausibly a cat's experiences have phenomenal characters, but it is unclear in what sense phenomenological study seems to reveal these properties (whose study? surely not the cat's!). And plausibly a subject in the possession of a theory about the

connection between conscious and nonconscious mental features could come to believe largely on the basis of first-person methods that his experience has certain nonconscious features; it is unclear whether this would count as 'phenomenological study'.

Still, in the present context, both worries can be finessed. Moore is solely concerned with the mental features of mature adult humans; and Moore is solely concerned with mental features that seem to be revealed even to those without any expert knowledge. Since Moore says little or nothing else which might tip the balance toward one or the other interpretation, it is at worst indeterminate whether Moore is concerned with phenomenal characters or with features available to phenomenological study. But the indeterminacy can be resolved: on any reasonable way of understanding the problematic notions of 'availability' and 'phenomenological study', the class of phenomenal characters is either identical with, or a more natural kind than, the class of features available to phenomenological study. Since charitable interpretation mandates breaking ties by naturalness (Lewis 1983), I will understand Moore to be concerned with the question What kinds of properties are certain phenomenal characters of perceptual experiences? That is, Moore aims to propose a 'theory of character', in the sense of section 1.

2.2. *Two Constituents of Phenomenal Characters*

Moore's case for relationism begins with the observation that 'We all know that the sensation of blue differs from that of green. But it is plain that if both are *sensations* they also have some point in common' (444). But the usage 'the sensation of blue' and 'the sensation of green' is type-token ambiguous. Let P_B be the phenomenal character of a token 'sensation of blue' (which I will understand as a typical experience of seeing a blue thing); let P_G be the phenomenal character of a token 'sensation of green' (similarly). Then, on the one hand, 'the sensation of blue' might refer to P_B; on the other hand, it might be used to speak generically about token experiences which are phenomenally P_B.[13] Since Moore is principally interested in the nature of phenomenal characters, I will generally break the ambiguity in the former direction, while shifting without comment to the latter direction when context especially strongly recommends doing so.

Moore thinks that an explanation of the similarity between P_B and P_G would go by specifying a 'common element' somehow involved in P_B and P_G, and an explanation of the difference would go by specifying an element somehow involved in P_B but not P_G, and an element somehow involved in P_G but not P_B: 'What is it that they have in common? And how is this common element related to the points in which they differ?' (444). As Moore reveals a bit later, he takes these 'elements' to be *parts* of the entities in question.[14] So Moore believes that P_B and P_G are similar because each has some part in common with the other, and different because each has some part not in common with the other.[15]

Moore names those parts: the common part is something he calls 'consciousness'; something he calls 'blue' is part of P_B but not P_G; and something he calls 'green' is part of P_G but not P_B; he calls an entity which is part of an experience but (unlike 'consciousness') not part of every experience the *object* of the experience:

> I will call the common element 'consciousness' without yet attempting to say what the thing I so call *is*. We have then in every sensation two distinct terms, (1) 'consciousness,' in respect of which all sensations are alike; and (2) something else, in respect of which one sensation differs from another. It will be convenient if I may be allowed to call this second term the 'object' of a sensation: this also without yet attempting to say what I mean by the word.
>
> We have then in every sensation two distinct elements, one which I call consciousness, and the other which I call the object of consciousness. This must be so if the sensation of blue and the sensation of green, though different in one respect, are alike in another: blue is one object of sensation and green is another, and consciousness, which both sensations have in common, is different from either. (444)

In order to avoid prejudicing interpretation of what Moore means by 'consciousness', 'blue', and 'green', I will use the names '*C*', '*B*', and '*G*' rather than Moore's terminology when discussing Moore's view. Using this terminology, Moore's view is that P_B and P_G are similar because both have *C* as a part; and they are different because the latter but not the former has *G* as a part and the former but not the latter has *B* as a part.[16] One of my central exegetical aims in this paper will be to determine what Moore takes *C*, *B*, and *G* to be.

A bit later, it will become significant to assess how Moore takes himself to make reference to *C*, *B*, and *G*. Is Moore intending to refer to these entities *ostensively*, as entities we can pick out in reflection on experience, or *by description*, in virtue of the theoretical role these entities play in explaining the similarity and difference of P_B and P_G experiences? Up to p. 445, the evidence one way or the other is a bit too thin to say anything determinate, though shortly thereafter, as I will show, he seems convinced that they can be picked out ostensively.

2.3. The Identity View and 'Transparency'

Having laid this groundwork, Moore turns to assessing a series of views as to the nature of phenomenal character (in particular, of P_B): two which he rejects (the promised identity and content views), and one which he accepts (the promised relational view). In this subsection, I analyze the discussion of the identity view, in the context of which the transparency passage occurs. On my reading, this discussion is inconclusive: the main dialectical game is played out between the relational and content views. The reader who is eager to rush to the highlights of my interpretation may therefore skip this subsection.

Moore commences discussion of the identity view by rejecting it: 'to identify [. . .] ''blue'' [. . .] with the corresponding sensation is in every case, a self-contradictory error. It is to identify a part either with the whole of which it is a part or else with the other part of that same whole' (445).[17] What is the rejected view? Reading 'the corresponding sensation' as referring to P_B—after all, we have seen Moore's case that B is part of P_B—the allegedly erroneous claim is then that $P_B = B$. I will call this the *identity* view.

If Moore is correct to claim that B is a proper part of P_B, it would be false to claim that the two are identical, and perhaps even absurd (if perhaps not 'self-contradictory'). Moore also asserts at this point that B could be instantiated without P_B being instantiated—or, as he puts it, that 'blue might exist and yet the sensation of blue not exist' (445). This would follow from the doctrine that B is a proper part of P_B (on the credible assumption that if x is a proper part of y, x could exist, or be instantiated, without y existing, or being instantiated). Moore seems to regard a certain form of idealism as hereby 'refuted': namely, the form 'identifying blue with the sensation of blue'; on which '*esse* is held to be *percipi* because *what is experienced* is held to be identical with *the experience of it*' (445). He attributes this doctrine to the idealists 'Berkeley and Mill' as well as to more 'modern Idealists'—indeed, in an abundance of enthusiasm, he reveals his 'opinion that no philosopher has ever yet succeeded in avoiding this self-contradictory error' (445).[18]

Shortly after this attack on the identity view, Moore writes down the *transparency* passage:

> There is a very good reason why they [philosophers] should have supposed so [that P_B and B are not 'two and different, but one and the same'], in the fact that when we refer to introspection and try to discover what the sensation of blue is, it is very easy to suppose that we have before us only a single term. The term 'blue' is easy enough to distinguish, but the other element which I have called 'consciousness'—that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green—is extremely difficult to fix. That many people fail to distinguish it at all is sufficiently shown by the fact that there are materialists. And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent—we look through it and see nothing but the blue; we may be convinced that there *is something* but *what* it is no philosopher, I think, has yet clearly recognized. (446)

Here Moore acknowledges that C—'the other element which I have called ''consciousness''—that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green'; 'that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact'[19]—is 'extremely difficult to fix', or ostend, and 'seems to escape us'. Still, not everything which can be ostended can be *easily* ostended—something very small, and with a similar colour to its complicated surround might be ostendible but not easily so. C is just one of those things. For reasons which Moore does not attempt to

provide, when we attempt to focus our attention on *C*, we tend to 'look through' it and 'see nothing but' *B*. Moore's point in this passage is emphatically *not* that *C* is impossible to ostend: if it were, it would be bizarrely coy to say only that *C* is 'extremely difficult' to fix and that 'many people' fail to distinguish it; but more importantly, were this admitted, the entire point of the passage would be lost.

But what is the point of the passage? Why is it important for Moore's attack on the identity view for him to explain away its plausibility by appeal to a difficulty in ostending *C*? Doesn't Moore have a perfectly good logical/metaphysical case in hand against the identity view? Who cares about the psychological quirks that might have led various philosophers to endorse it? But, as I will now argue, these psychological quirks are crucially important to Moore's line of argumentation: to see this, consider once again the question of the sort of referential access Moore takes us to have to *C*, *B*, and *G*—whether they are introduced ostensively, or by description.

If Moore's intention is the latter—that *C*, *B*, and *G* are theoretical entities picked out by their theoretical role in a theory explaining how distinct phenomenal characters can be similar—the attack succeeds only if his explanation can be shown to defeat all competitors.[20] And there are doubtless competing accounts of the data about similarity and distinctness. By way of comparison, circularity and squareness are similar in a certain way in which neither is similar to *weighing 10 pounds*: both are shapes. But they are still distinct properties. It is not plausible to hold that circularity and squareness are composites of shape and some residue, where the residue differs between the properties. What would this residue be? Would it be some property which a thing with no shape could have? The hypothesis of such a residue is mysterious. Rather, we say that the similarity of circularity and squareness consists in the fact that both are determinates of the determinable property *shape*. Appeal to the 'determinate/determinable' label is not much of an explanation, but it at least groups together a number of otherwise disparate phenomena. So perhaps the similarity of P_B and P_G consists in the fact that $P_B = B$, $P_G = G$, and both are determinates of some determinable property (*C*, for instance). Moore does not consider this option, which is certainly not without appeal. So if *C*, *B*, and *G* are introduced only by description, the attack on the identity view fails.

Still, Moore's intention might yet be the former—that *C*, *B*, and *G* are familiar entities picked out ostensively. In this case, the attack would not be vulnerable to the existence of other ways of accounting for similarity and difference than by sharing or failure to share parts—after all, it might simply be manifest to one who investigates these familiar entities sufficiently closely that *C* and *B* are parts of P_B, and that *C* and *G* are parts of P_G. Still, the attack would succeed only if the acts of ostension succeed in lighting on entities. And the friend of the identity view might attempt to undermine the attack by arguing it to be nonsensical: by arguing that the act of ostension through which *C* was introduced fails. Indeed, this is exactly the reply one would expect an advocate of the identity view to give. So Moore must provide a rebuttal to this reply which respects the plausibility of the identity view.

The rebuttal distinguishes what can be ostended if one is *careful* in introspection from what can be ostended if one is *careless* in introspection. *C* can be ostended only if one is careful; unfortunately, Moore suggests, the friend of the identity view has been careless.

Of course there is no reason to suppose the friend of the identity view will just give up at this point. Nothing Moore has argued as yet rules out the view that *C* is a determinable of both *B* and *G*, and is difficult to ostend as a distinct property from *B* because of the close connection between determinates and their determinables. While Moore presents no positive case directly targeted at this view, the case he will soon give for the relational view is sufficiently general to cut against *it* as well.

2.4. The Content View

In this subsection, I turn to Moore's discussion of the content view. My discussion of this view and the case against it will stretch over the next several subsections: in this subsection, I address the content of Moore's introduction of the content view, and in the next, of the relational view; in the final subsection of this section, I explain Moore's case for the latter and against the former.

After the 'digression' (446) of the transparency passage, Moore switches course, turning to attack what is at least superficially a distinct view from the identity view that $P_B = B$, namely the *content view* that *B* is what Moore calls the 'content' (447) of an experience.[21] What is this view? (I emphasize the seemingly most significant passages in boldface.)

> 'Blue' is rightly and properly said to be the content of a blue flower. If, therefore, we also assert that it is part of the content of the sensation of blue, we assert that it has to the other parts (if any) of this whole the same relation which it has to the other parts of a blue flower—and we assert only this: we cannot mean to assert that it has to the sensation of blue any relation which it does not have to the blue flower. [T]he sensation of blue contains at least one other element beside blue—namely, what I call 'consciousness,' which makes it a sensation. So far then as we assert that blue is the content of the sensation, we assert that it has to this 'consciousness' the same relation which it has to the other parts of a blue flower [. . .]. Into the question what exactly **the relation** is **between blue and a blue flower in virtue of which we call the former part of its 'content'** I do not propose to enter. It is sufficient for my purpose to point out that it **is the general relation most commonly meant when we talk of a thing and its qualities** [. . .].
>
> When, therefore, blue is said to be part of the content of the 'sensation of blue,' the latter is treated as if it were a whole constituted in exactly the same way as any other 'thing.' The 'sensation of blue,' on this view, differs from a blue bead or a blue beard, in exactly the same way in which the two latter differ from one another: the blue bead differs from

> the blue beard, in that while the former contains glass, the latter contains hair; and the 'sensation of blue' differs from both in that, instead of glass or hair, it contains consciousness. **The relation of the blue to the consciousness is conceived to be exactly the same as that of the blue to the glass or hair: it is in all three cases the *quality* of a *thing*.**
>
> [. . .] [T]he element 'consciousness,' being common to all sensations, may be and certainly is regarded as in some sense their 'substance,' and by the 'content' of each is only meant that in respect of which one differs from another. In this sense then 'blue' might be said to be *the* content of the sensation; but, in that case, the analysis into 'content' and 'existence' is, at least, misleading, since under 'existence' must be included '*what* exists' in the sensation other than blue.
>
> We have it, then, as a universally received opinion that blue is related to the sensation or idea of blue, as its *content*, and that this view, if it is to be true, must mean that blue is part of *what* is said to exist when we say that the sensation exists. **To say that the sensation exists is to say both that blue exists and that 'consciousness,' whether we call it the substance of which blue is *the* content or call it another part of the content, exists too. Any sensation or idea is a '*thing*,' and what I have called its object is the quality of this thing.** (447–8)

Moore expends quite a few words explaining the content view, but it can be stated briskly enough. There are two versions: a *substance-attribute* version, on which B is a quality of anything P_B, and C is the substance of which anything P_B is fashioned; and a *dual-quality* version, on which B and C are both qualities of anything P_B. About this much Moore is highly explicit. On the substance-attribute view, it would be natural to identify P_B with the property of being made of B-ish C; on the dual-quality view, it would be natural to identify P_B with the property of being B and C. Both views are thus distinct from the identity view.

Another point is left implicit, but is strongly suggested by his examples: like the blueness which qualifies a blue flower, a blue bead, or a blue beard, the content view takes B to be an *intrinsic* quality of anything P_B; like the property of being made of glass, the property of being made of C, as appealed to by the substance-attribute view, would be intrinsic; like glassiness, C, as appealed to by the dual-quality view, would also be intrinsic.[22]

2.5. *The True Analysis of Sensation*

Moore does not attack these views directly, choosing instead to advance a competing proposal, then to argue the superiority of this proposal. In a long paragraph on pp. 449–50, Moore reveals the 'true analysis of a sensation or idea'. The paragraph's structure is jumbled, and its terminology can be confusing, so I will rewrite it. (The passages in the paragraph that ground my attributions are provided in footnotes to those attributions.)

Moore begins by telling us what *C* is: it is the familiar relation of *consciousness-of*, or *awareness-of*, or *experiencing*, or *knowledge-of*, which subjects of experience bear to experienced entities—I will refer to this relation as 'awareness-of'.[23] For an experience to be P_B would then be at least for it to be a case of awareness of *something*.[24] He does not tell us right out what that thing is, but context makes clear that the thing is just, as he puts it, *B*[25]—or, more strictly speaking, just an *instance* of *B* (I'll interchange these locutions henceforth, always intending the latter).[26]

Moore then makes a few metaphysical points about awareness-of. In particular, awareness-of is not *B* (as against a view which collapses the content view into the identity view by collapsing *C* into *B*); awareness-of is not a substance which *B* modifies (against the substance-attribute view); and awareness-of is not an intrinsic property (against the dual-quality view). Rather, in a case of awareness of *B*, awareness-of has a 'perfectly distinct and unique' relation to *B*. Moore is rather inarticulate about what this relation is. Charitably integrating Moore's inarticulate remarks with his claim that one is aware of *B* strongly recommends understanding the 'perfectly distinct and unique' relation as that *B* (or one of *B*'s instances) *saturates the second argument position of C*. After all, in a case of awareness of *B*, this is what happens.[27] Moore's inarticulacy can be accounted for on this interpretation: familiarly, in 1903, Moore hadn't yet acquired from Russell adequate vocabulary for discussing argument structure.

Putting all this together, the true analysis of sensation is that for an experience to be P_B is for it to be a case of bearing the relation of awareness-of to *B*. Accordingly, P_B would seem to be the property *being an instance of awareness between a subject of experience and B*, as on the relational view. The relational view is clearly incompatible with each version of the content view,[28] which Moore rejects: for an experience to be P_B, to be a case of awareness of *B*, is not for it to have *B* as an intrinsic quality.[29] (Still, these properties might be compatible, as I discuss below.)

In the long paragraph, Moore also fills out the relational view a bit by drawing out a pair of its consequences for the nature of reflection on experiences: to know that a P_B experience exists is to know that a case of awareness of *B* exists;[30] awareness of a P_B experience is awareness of a case of awareness of *B*.[31] By contrast, awareness of a P_B experience is not awareness of a particular with *B* as an intrinsic quality.[32]

One might object, at this point, that the discussion underdetermines whether Moore endorses the relational view, as I claim, or rather the representational view discussed in section 1. Perhaps awareness-of, or *C*, is a 'representational-property radical' like *being correct as a representation of the world iff something is blah*, and the 'perfectly distinct and unique relation' between *C* and *B* is that borne between such a radical and the property which 'completes' it. I address this alternative in section 4.2.[33]

2.6. What Introspection Enables Moore to Decide

Why, in Moore's view, is the relational view to be preferred to the variants of the content view?[34] Here, he is highly explicit about his evidence, in a way he was

not in his discussion of the identity view. First, he argues that introspection provides no support for the content view: 'Whether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue, my introspection does not enable me to decide with certainty: I only see no reason for thinking that it is' (450) (he has just argued that the content view may be expressed as the claim that a 'sensation of blue' is a '*blue awareness*'). Second, he argues that introspection *does* provide support for the relational view: 'introspection *does* enable me to decide that something else is also true: namely that I am aware *of* blue, and by this I mean, that my awareness has to blue a quite different and distinct relation' (450): by introspection of an experience with phenomenal character P_B, one can determine that this phenomenal character is of one's bearing awareness-of to B. So, the relational view is to be preferred to the content view on the grounds that, unlike the content view, the relational view acquires evidential support from careful introspection.

The qualifier *careful* is needed, since not just any introspection will be a source of this evidential support. Prior to providing his evidence for the true analysis of sensation, the long paragraph concludes with Moore's apparent attempt to ward off in advance an objection in the *diaphanousness passage*:

> ... this omission [of the fact that in a P_B experience, B saturates the internal argument position of the relation of awareness-of] is *not* mere negligence of expression, but is due to the fact that though philosophers have recognized that *something* distinct is meant by consciousness, they have never yet had a clear conception of *what* that something is. They have not been able to hold *it* and *blue* before their minds and to compare them, in the same way in which they can compare *blue* and *green*. And this for the reason I gave above: namely that the moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see *what*, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. Yet it *can* be distinguished if we look enough, and if we know that there is something to look for. My main object in this paragraph has been to try to make the reader *see* it; but I fear I shall have succeeded very ill. (450)

The objection, of course, is that introspection does *not* provide evidential support for the relational view. If it did, runs the objection, we would all already accept it, rather than the competing content view. But the content view is, Moore worries, popular.

Once again, the reply distinguishes what is revealed to careful introspection from what is revealed to careless introspection. C, or awareness-of, eludes the attention of, or seems to vanish from, one who introspects P_B with insufficient care: and since awareness-of seems to vanish, so does B's standing as the saturator of the second argument place of awareness-of, and with it, evidential support for the relational view. However, if one introspects with sufficient care,

one will be able to overcome this tendency of awareness-of to vanish, and be able to hold it before one's mind, notice that *B* saturates its internal argument, and become convinced of the true analysis of sensation.[35]

To sum up the results of this section, Moore defends two claims about what introspection provides him with a basis for deciding: first, that it provides him with a basis for deciding that his experiences of blue things have as phenomenal characters properties like *being a case of bearing awareness-of to B*; second, that introspection does not bear at all on whether his experiences are *B*.

3. The Relational View in the 'Refutation' of Idealism

Moore's overarching aim is, of course, to 'refute' idealism. In this section, I will try to determine how defending the relational view is intended to contribute to this aim. (Note that without the principle Instantiation from section 1 (that if *e* is phenomenally *F*, *e* is *F*), nothing at all about the nature of experience or its relation to external entities would seem to follow from a doctrine about which phenomenal characters there are. Moore's argumentation on this point thus implicitly presupposes Instantiation; for purposes of evaluating the argumentation, I will grant Instantiation, eliding the step from an experience's being phenomenally *F* to its being *F*.)

After reiterating, on the basis of the considerations in the long paragraph, the 'result' that 'what is called the *content* of a sensation is in very truth what I originally called it—the sensation's *object*,' Moore asks:

> But, if all this be true, what follows?
>
> Idealists admit that some things really exist of which they are not aware: there are some things, they hold, which are not inseparable aspects of their experience, even if they be inseparable aspects of some experience. They further hold that some of the things of which they are sometimes aware do really exist, even when they are not aware of them: they hold for instance that they are sometimes aware of other minds, which continue to exist even when they are not aware of them. They are, therefore, sometimes aware of something which is not an inseparable aspect of their own experience. They do know some things which are not a mere part or content of their experience. And what my analysis of sensation has been designed to show is, that whenever I have a mere sensation or idea, the fact is that I am then aware of something which is equally and in the same sense *not* an inseparable aspect of my experience. The awareness which I have maintained to be included in sensation is the very same unique fact which constitutes every kind of knowledge: 'blue' is as much an object, and as little a mere content, of my experience, when I experience it, as the most exalted and independent real thing of which I am ever aware. There is, therefore, no question of how we are to 'get outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations.' Merely to have a sensation is already to *be* outside that circle.

> It is to know something which is as truly and really *not* a part of *my* experience, as anything which I can ever know.
>
> [. . .] There is certainly nothing which they [idealists] are so firmly convinced to be an inseparable aspect of their experience as what they call the *content* of their ideas and sensations. If, therefore, *this* turns out in every case, whether it be also the content or not, to be at least *not* an inseparable aspect of the experience of it, it will be readily admitted that nothing else which *we* experience ever is such an inseparable aspect. But if we never experience anything but what is *not* an inseparable aspect of *that* experience, how can we infer that anything whatever, let alone *everything*, is an inseparable aspect of *any* experience? How utterly unfounded is the assumption that '*esse* is *percipi*' appears in the clearest light. (451)

I think there is little doubt that this passage is the intended climax of the second half of the paper: here Moore finally turns from the instrumental task of developing his answer to the 'uninteresting question' 'What is a sensation or idea?' to his quarry of assessing the status of idealism; and on the basis of the considerations in this passage, he extracts from the true analysis of sensation the conclusion that the characteristic doctrine of idealism ('*esse* is *percipi*') is false.

How is this extraction supposed to go? Moore's idealist believes that everything is an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences. Moore takes it to follow from his analysis of sensation that even 'blue'—the best candidate for such an 'inseparable aspect'—is not; hence the idealist's general claim falls to the existence of a counterexample. But why does Moore think it follows from his analysis that 'blue' is not an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences?

Moore has considered two theories of the relationship between his experiences and 'blue.' On the content view (assuming Instantiation), his experiences as of blue things instantiate *B*; on the object view (again assuming Instantiation), an experience as of a blue thing is a case of awareness of something *B*. Moore notes that these views are compatible: it can be consistently held that such an experience is both *B* and a case of awareness of something *B*—namely, presumably, itself. So there are three possibilities on the table: (i) experiences as of blue things are *B* but not cases of awareness of something *B*; (ii) experiences as of blue things are *B* and cases of awareness of something *B*, namely themselves—such experiences are *reflexive*; (iii) experiences as of blue things are not *B*, but are cases of awareness of something *B*, hence of something distinct from themselves. As we have seen, Moore thinks he can rule out possibility (i) (by 'introspection' plus a healthy implicit dose of Instantiation), but he does not take himself to have a case that would decide between (ii) and (iii) ('Whether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue, my introspection does not enable me to decide with certainty: I only see no reason for thinking that it is' (450)).

Moore seems prepared to grant the idealist that if (i) were the case, 'blue' would be an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences; and we can take the idealist to be

prepared to grant that if (iii) were the case, 'blue' would not be an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences. So the idealist is refuted only if on (ii), 'blue' is not an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences. Moore is remarkably sanguine that this is so.

Whether he is right to be depends, of course, on what is meant by calling 'blue' an 'inseparable aspect' of experiences. Plausibly a property *F* is inseparable from *G*s iff it is impossible to 'separate,' or make separate, *F* from *G*s; or, more compactly, iff necessarily, if something is *F*, it is *G*. Accordingly, 'blue' is an inseparable aspect of experiences iff necessarily, if something is 'blue,' it is an experience.[36] It seems to me that a case can be constructed out of Moorean ingredients that 'blue' is a separable aspect of experience even if it is actually part of the content of, and thus instantiated in, typical sensations of blue, as per (ii).

Moore has argued that introspection provides no case that experiences instantiate 'blue.' So, assuming Moore not to have any other a posteriori evidence that everything 'blue' is an experience—and assuming that there is no a priori case to be made that everything 'blue' is an experience, a point which seems to be a central conclusion of the first half of the paper[37]—it is, in decidedly non-Moorean parlance, *epistemically possible* that 'blue' is not instantiated in an experience.

Of course, what Moore needs to show is that this is *metaphysically* possible. But it would be charitable, in this context, to spot Moore this consequence. First, it would be seven decades before the philosophical community first sees a battery of arguments for distinguishing metaphysical and epistemic possibility (Kripke 1972/1980). And second, Moore spends a good deal of the first half of the paper arguing *against* distinguishing the necessary and the 'analytic' (438–44). Now, there may well be merit to this distinction—namely, if such claims as 'I am here now' are counted as analytic, as on the system of Kaplan 1977/1989. Still, these counterexamples would also be several decades in the discovering, so it would be charitable to spot Moore the doctrine that *p* is necessary just if analytic.[38] Let's also spot Moore the assumption—very plausible on any credible notion of analyticity—that if a proposition is analytic its negation is not epistemically possible. It then follows that if a proposition is epistemically possible, it is metaphysically possible. So Moore has what he needs to show that 'blue' is not an inseparable aspect of experience.[39]

Indeed, Moore thinks he can do better: in the last paragraph of the paper, he expresses his view that we have a posteriori evidence of the existence of things other than experiences:

> The question requiring to be asked about material things is thus: [. . .] What reason have we for supposing that material things do *not* exist, since *their* existence has precisely the same evidence as that of our sensations? That either exist *may* be false; but if it is a reason for doubting the existence of matter, that it is an inseparable aspect of our experience, the same reasoning will prove conclusively that our experience does not exist either, since that must also be an inseparable aspect of our experience of *it*. The only *reasonable* alternative to the admission that

> matter exists *as well* as spirit, is absolute Scepticism—that, as likely as not *nothing* exists at all. (453)

To sum up, the following doctrines capture in the abstract Moore's views on idealism. (a) No a priori case can be made that everything (whether actual or possible) is an experience. (b) (i) An a posteriori case can be made that something instantiates 'blue,' but (ii) no a posteriori case can be made that that thing (whatever it is) is an experience—it is hence epistemically possible that something is not an experience, and hence metaphysically possible that something is not an experience. And (foreshadowing Moore's later famous 'proof' of an external world (Moore 1939)) (c) an a posteriori case can be made that some actual things are not experiences—hence (we should accept that) some actual things are not experiences. Claim (a) is defended in the first half of the paper; claim (b) is defended in the bulk of the second half; claim (c) in the last paragraph.

The discussion of what introspection enables one to decide bears on part (b). The positive support given in that discussion for the relational view is support for (b-i); the negative claims made concerning the content view are support for (b-ii).

Viewed in this light, all the serious anti-idealist work is done in the first half of the paper and its last paragraph. After all, none of the figures Moore opposed defended idealism on the grounds that it receives a posteriori support from introspection, so undermining this claim (the work of (b-ii)) is of little value. It would suffice for refuting idealism to show that no a priori case that everything is an experience will work; and that there is an a posteriori case that something isn't an experience. Indeed, depending on the relative weights one's audience assigns to a posteriori and a priori evidence, merely defending claim (c) might suffice. So the second part of the paper does little dialectical work. Still, it might be seen as playing a significant pedagogical or rhetorical role, of 'softening up' the audience for the concluding knockout punch of the final paragraph: if it can be established that for the most central case of a property one might take to be instantiated in experience, a posteriori evidence bears neither way on whether it is so instantiated, an audience with idealist leanings could become more receptive to its being an epistemic possibility that *being a table* isn't instantiated in experience; which is pretty close to its being no epistemic possibility that *being a table* is instantiated in experience.

4. Competing Interpretations

I will now consider two interpretations competing with my claim that Moore endorses the relational view, one on which Moore is a *direct realist*, and one on which Moore is a *representationalist* (in the sense developed in section 1, namely holding that phenomenal characters of sensations of blue are properties involving the possession of truth-conditional content).

4.1. A Direct Realist Interpretation

Recent discussion in the philosophy of perception and consciousness has been heavily influenced by Harman's (1990: 251) remark that 'When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colours she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. [. . .] And that is true of you too'. Here, Harman makes a phenomenological case for the claim that colours are external entities—thus, presumably, already separate from experience. It's pretty clear though that this isn't Moore's intent: after all, as noted above, Moore's view is that 'Whether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue, my introspection does not enable me to decide with certainty' (450). So it's pretty clear that Moore doesn't agree with Harman.

Still, one might think that Moore *could* (and even *should*) have taken on Harman's observation (certainly the letter of the observation is very plausible). Combining this view with Moore's relational view of phenomenal character yields something like Strawson's (1979: 97) 'direct realist' view that 'mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as [. . .] an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of things outside of us'.[40]

Still, even if Moore were to endorse Harman's observation that every *colour* seems to be a quality of something external, it is not clear that he would be thereby compelled by his view that the sensation of blue is, phenomenally, a case of awareness of something 'blue,' to endorse the Strawsonian view that the sensation of blue is, phenomenally, a case of awareness of something external. For it is not clear that Moore thinks that 'blue' is a *colour*.

Indeed, retrospective remarks (Moore 1942: 655–8) suggest otherwise. In those remarks, Moore distinguishes two uses of 'blue': one in which we say of something material ('such things as a tie or a flag or an india rubber ball') that it is blue, and one in which we say of a sense-datum (such as 'an afterimage, which we see with closed eyes') that it is blue. The former sort of use attributes, as Moore explains, a 'property', the latter a 'quality' or 'sensible quality'. The property and the quality are distinct,[41] or at least this is epistemically possible.[42] In the 1903 paper, he had been intending to discuss the quality, rather than the property.[43]

Maybe it was epistemically possible for the 1903 Moore that the property is identical to the quality. But the tenor of the retrospective remarks strongly suggests that it was also epistemically possible for the 1903 Moore that the property is distinct from the quality: the 1942 Moore says that the 1903 Moore's uses of 'blue' referred to the *quality*; he does not say that they referred to the property; he does not say that they were indeterminate in reference as between the quality and the property.

So in order to extract the Strawsonian view from Harman's observation and Moore's relational view, one additionally needs the claim that the quality is identical with the property—only then can it be clear that Moore's 'blue' is among the *colours* Harman discusses rather than the *qualities* Moore discusses (perhaps Moore would regard Harman's colours as rather among Moore's

properties). And Moore would remain indecisive about this identity claim up to his last paper, finally concluding that they are distinct.[44]

4.2. A Representationalist Interpretation

A representational property is, as characterized in section 1, a property like *being correct as a representation of the world iff p*. The *representational view* is the doctrine that P_B is a representational property. There are a number of ways of spelling out what representational property it might be; the details don't matter for the purposes of assessing whether Moore endorses the view, so I will suppose that P_B is taken by the representationalist to be the property R_B of being correct iff a case of *B* is presented to one—I'm leaving 'presented to' as a placeholder.[45]

I am inclined to think that Moore rejects a variant of the representational view in the following passage. On the content view:

> Any sensation or idea is a '*thing*,' and what I have called its object is the quality of this thing. Such a 'thing' is what we think of when we think of a *mental image*. A mental image is conceived as if it were related to that of which it is the image (if there be any such thing) in exactly the same way as the image in a looking-glass is related to that of which it is the reflexion; in both cases there is identity of content, and the image in the looking-glass differs from that in the mind solely in respect of the act that in the one case the other constituent of the image is 'glass' and in the other case it is consciousness. If the image is of blue, it is not conceived that this 'content' has any relation to the consciousness but what it has to the glass; it is conceived *merely* to be its *content*. And owing to the fact that sensations and ideas are all considered to be *wholes* of this description—things in the mind—the question: What do we know? is considered to be identical with the question: What reason have we for supposing that there are things outside the mind *corresponding* to these that are inside it? (448–9)

This passage is extremely puzzling, but I think it can be profitably interpreted as follows. Moore means to discuss mental events with representational content when he writes of 'mental images', but he is presupposing a highly clunky and antiquated 'copy' or 'mimetic' theory of representation (as advocated in Plato's *Cratylus*). On the mimetic theory, to represent a certain ostensible state of affairs is to *resemble* it: Moore's use of 'correspond' is then intended to mean 'resemble'.

The view under consideration in the puzzling passage, then, is that a looking-glass manages to represent the state of affairs that a blue sphere is near a red cube by taking on the properties of that state of affairs: by going blue in a spherical (or at least round) area (made of glass) nearby a cubical (or at least square, or hexagonal) area (made of glass) in which it has gone red. So, similarly, if an experience were to represent such a state of affairs ('if there be any such thing'), it would have to come to resemble that state of affairs, by, for instance, going blue

in a spherical (or at least round) area (made of consciousness) nearby a cubical (or at least square, or hexagonal) area (made of consciousness) in which it has gone red; or, more likely, by taking on some blue-like property in a spherical-like part (made of consciousness) bearing a nearby-like relation to a cubical-like part in which it has gone red-like.

From our present perspective, such a mimetic view of representation is readily seen to be absurd and unworkable; indeed, Moore himself explicitly rejects it in earlier work (Moore 1901–2). It seems clear, then, that Moore is attributing the mimetic view to his *opponent*. If so, the content view as he describes it, and which he rejects, consists of two claims: the representational view of phenomenal character, that P_B is R_B; and the mimetic theory of representation, that R_B is the property of being made of *B*-ish consciousness.

Which of these two does he reject? An advocate of the representationalist interpretation says the latter alone; I say both. To flesh out the advocate of that interpretation a bit, I take him to endorse the following claims. What Moore rejects about the content view is not the doctrine that P_B is R_B, but rather the mimetic theory of representation. The central purpose of the second half of the paper is to reject the mimetic theory of representation and establish that representation involves not copying, but rather whatever it is that Moore calls 'consciousness.' *C*, the common element to the sensation of green and the sensation of blue, is not the relation of awareness-of (as on the interpretation advanced here), or the property of being made of *blah*-ish consciousness (as the mimeticist thinks), but rather the representational property radical of having the representational correctness condition that something *blah* is presented to one. *B* and *G* are the colours of material objects blueness and greenness (in the terminology of the previous subsection, 'properties' rather than 'qualities').[46]

I think this interpretation is mistaken. First, Moore's language is suggestive: he regards P_B as composed of *C* and *B*, where *C* is 'knowing,' and what is known is *B*; quite plausibly, *knowing* something is not merely representing it to be.[47] He also says that in P_B one's awareness has a certain *relation* to something *B*; plausibly, something might have the representational correctness condition that a case of *B* is presented to one without standing in any relation to something *B*.[48]

Second, it is at odds with the claim pressed in the previous subsection that by 'blue', Moore intended the 'quality' rather than the 'property'.

Third, it forces the posit of a radical and unannounced break between Moore's view in the paper under discussion and his view in his next paper on perception (Moore 1905–6). Moore's advocacy of an act-object conception of sensation was, like retrospective self-criticism, a constant throughout the remainder of his philosophical career: it would be surprising, on this view, if there were no acknowledgement of such a conversion in any of Moore's later self-critical writings, but I know of no such acknowledgement.

Fourth, a central view of Moore's at the time is that truth and falsity are properties of complex entities involving their constituents being related to one another in special ways (Moore 1899). But there is no indication in the present paper that the object of sensation is not simple.

Finally, the representational view would not sit as well as the relational view in Moore's attempted refutation of idealism as I reconstruct it. In the puzzling passage, Moore is concerned that, on the content view, 'owing to the fact that sensations and ideas are all considered to be *wholes* of this description—things in the mind—the question: What do we know? is considered to be identical with the question: What reason have we for supposing that there are things outside the mind *corresponding* to these that are inside it?' After all—setting aside the recent innovation of content externalism—representational properties are intrinsic features of experience, possessable in the complete absence of external satisfiers. This remark about the content view foreshadows his ultimate complaint, that the idealist opens, what Moore's theory of sensation closes off: the 'question of how we are to ''get outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations''', because 'merely to have a sensation is already to *be* outside that circle. It is to know something which is truly and really *not* a part of *my* experience, as anything which I can ever know' (451). I suggest, then, that part of Moore's ground for his rejection of the content view is its inability to sustain the role he wants his theory of phenomenal character to play in the rejection of idealism.

Moore would be correct to worry. Note the following asymmetry: content externalism aside, the instantiation by an experience of the property of being correct iff something is blue is entirely compatible with the absence of anything blue; by contrast, the instantiation of the property of being a case of awareness of something 'blue' is not compatible with the absence of anything 'blue'. Accordingly, on the representational interpretation, it is very hard to see how, merely by reflecting on phenomenal character (together with the handsome gift of Instantiation), there is any hope of establishing (b). But without (b), there's no case for the metaphysical possibility of something blue but not an experience (at least not without importation of heavy-duty assumptions with no textual basis, such as that whatever is represented in experience is metaphysically possible). And without that, it is very hard to see what role the second part of the paper would play in the refutation of idealism.

5. Conclusion: Moore and the Contemporary Philosophy of Perception and Consciousness

What does Moore's paper offer to contemporary philosophers of perception and consciousness?

The question is not easy to answer. Moore's text is both very challenging and very evocative. That's a dangerous combination, because the temptation is great to enlist Moore in one's army without first checking his citizenship.

To see this at work, one need merely contrast the level of fame of the transparency and diaphanousness passages with that of the phenomenological case for the relational view: the former are doubtless more famous than any other two philosophical passages from 1903, while the latter has been largely ignored.[49] If my analysis is on track, this reverses the importance Moore placed on these

notions: for Moore, the latter is the keystone of the second part of the paper, while the former is peripheral, brought up only to ward off objections to the main line of argument.

Furthermore, recall the conclusion of section 2: that in Moore's view, first, introspection provides him with a basis for deciding that his experiences of blue things have as phenomenal characters mental relational properties like *being a case of bearing awareness-of to B*; second, introspection does not bear at all on whether his experiences are *B*. Compare this to a central episode in the contemporary discussion of transparency-related theses:

> When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colours she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. [. . .] Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree. (Harman 1990: 251)

Here Harman can be plausibly read as maintaining, first, that introspection of visual experience reveals no mental features (in particular, no intrinsic mental features); second, that such qualities as *B* are experienced as external. Moore and Harman differ on the crucial questions of both whether *B* is introspectively presented as external and whether introspective attention can be turned to any mental features. Although Moore and Harman are widely assumed to be allies, it is more accurate to portray them as starkly opposed.

In addition, many of the doctrines contemporary philosophers have brought under the rubric of transparency are not obviously to be found in the transparency or diaphanousness passages (for all that, they might still be true). If my interpretation is on track, we can reach the following conclusions about these passages:

- What Moore considers for its transparency status is 'that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact'—namely, *C*, the relation of awareness-of.[50]
- What Moore means by saying that something is transparent or diaphanous is that we cannot turn introspective attention to it.[51]
- The transparency and diaphanousness passages together are best read as *denials* of transparency (together with acknowledgements of its allure).[52]

In a nutshell, these passages argue nothing more than that, if we are careful—though not otherwise—we can turn our introspective attention to the relation of awareness-of.

That point seems important, and deserving of attention. As do a number of other of Moore's points and strategies: the relational view of phenomenal character is an important view;[53] Moore's use of introspection on behalf of

doctrines in the philosophy of mind is an important methodology;[54] the question whether the latter methodology supports the former doctrine deserves attention;[55] as does whether the latter methodology fails to support certain other claims about phenomenal characters (such as their being 'sensible qualities' or representational properties).

Moore's paper thus offers quite a lot to contemporary philosophers of perception and consciousness—if not everything we have taken ourselves to find there.[56]

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NOTES

[1] All uncredited citations are to this article, the 'second half' of which begins 'I pass, then, from the uninteresting question ''Is *esse percipi*?'' to the still more uninteresting and apparently irrelevant question ''What is a sensation or idea?''' (444). All italicized emphasis in quotations reflects original typography; my emphasis in quotations is always in boldface.

[2] Some or other notion of transparency or diaphanousness, or some related notion, is discussed in regards to the phenomenal character of perceptual experience in the following: Harman 1990, 1996; Block 1990, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2003; Shoemaker 1990, 1991, 1994, 2001, 2003, 2006; Tye 1991, 1992, 1995, 2000, Summer 2003, 2006; Valberg 1992; Campbell 1993; Dretske 1995; Vision 1997; Martin 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006; Rosenthal 1997; Butchvarov 1998; Rey 1998; Sturgeon 1998, 2000; Lalor 1999; Vinueza 2000; Hilbert and Kalderon 2000; Langsam 2001; Van Gulick 2001, Fall 2004; Lycan 2001; Byrne 2001, 2002, 2006; Thau 2002; Smith 2002; Noë 2002; Leeds 2002; Caston 2002; Kind 2003; Loar 2003a,b; Metzinger 2003; Kriegel 2003; Macpherson 2003; Stoljar 2004; Siewert 2004; Crane Spring 2005, 2006; Chalmers 2004, 2006; Lormand 2004, 2006; Jacob 2005; Zahavi 2005; Hellie 2005, 2006, 2007; Stubenberg Spring 2005; Aydede Winter 2005; Jackson 2006a,b, 2007; Alter 2006; Gendler and Hawthorne 2006; Egan 2006; Thompson 2006, forthcoming; Holman 2006; Gluer 2007; Kalderon forthcoming; John forthcoming.

See also earlier discussions in Grice 1962; Sibley 1971; Armstrong 1979.

Most of these authors aren't concerned with Moore interpretation, though a few are; many of these authors don't make direct attributions to Moore, though many do. Since the point of this literature is not to get the history right, I won't worry much who in this literature said what about Moore.

[3] Klemke also complains that 'Moore could have easily omitted the whole discussion' of pp. 446–50, and speculates that the obscurity of the discussion there may have been 'why (or part of the reason why) years later Moore was unhappy with his ''Refutation''. In my view, this segment is the heart of the second half of the paper.

Two authors who in my view have it right on central pieces of the exegetical puzzle of what Moore meant are Robinson 1994 and Stoljar 2004: see fns. 39 and 4.

[4] Stoljar 2004 also somewhat tentatively proposes this interpretation of Moore.

[5] For further discussion of relationism, see the papers by Martin cited in fn. 2; also Campbell 2002a,b; Travis 2004; Johnston 2004, 2006; Crane 2006; Hellie 2006, 2007; Brewer in preparation; Fish in preparation.

[6] Some, but very plausibly not all, mental episodes are experiences: we feel comfortable with classifying a cognitive scientist's theoretical posit—such as the formation of one of Marr's 'primal sketches'—as a mental episode, but such an episode is no experience.

Central questions about the ontological and explanatory reducibility of phenomenal consciousness are orthogonal to the concerns of this paper and will not be mentioned.

[7] This usage of 'phenomenal character' is, in my view, standard, though other uses are abroad, such as Tye's use to concern whichever features one is most 'directly aware' of in a perceptual experience (Tye 2000); contrast also Shoemaker's 'phenomenal property' (Shoemaker 1994).

In Hellie 2007 I argue that this standard usage of 'phenomenal character' is defective, in the sense that it has two analytic consequences (the principle Instantiation, discussed below, and the principle that phenomenological study provides infallible access to phenomenal character) that are incompatible with certain other facts. Moore may presuppose both these analyticities: see section 3 on Instantiation; section 2.6 suggests a presupposition of this sort of infallibilism. Still, Moore's view is internally coherent: one of the other facts is the sort of Strawsonian 'direct realism' discussed in section 4.1; as we will see, Moore does not accept that position.

[8] A relational theory of apposition would be along the lines that for *e* to be *F* for *s* is for *s* to stand in a relation of awareness to *e*'s *F*ness.

[9] Less extreme versions employ a weaker quantifier (e.g. rather than 'every', 'enormously many', as per Siewert 1998), or perhaps allow for 'mannered' representational properties, such as *visually, blurredly, noisily, phenomenally* being correct as a representation of the world iff *p* (Chalmers 2004; Crane 2006).

I elide the distinction between representation and intentionality in this paper.

[10] For more on Instantiation, see Hellie 2007.

[11] In important historical work, Martin (2000) attempts to explain the pull toward a sense-datum conception felt by early 20th-Century philosophers of perception, such as Moore, Russell, Broad, and Price. What could explain their grazing so dangerously close to a view which threatens both the metaphysical excesses of Cartesian dualism and the semantico-epistemological abomination of the 'veil of perception'? Why not just endorse a representational conception of phenomenal character? Did they perhaps merely fail to recognize the phenomenon of intentionality (Harman 1990)? (Certainly, the claim that *Russell* did so does not ring especially true.)

Martin offers a more charitable explanation: these philosophers must have endorsed the relational view. (Martin does not note the requirement for extracting these conclusions to posit Instantiation, but that principle seems to have its own attractions.) But finding no explicit statement of the relational view, Martin concludes that these authors took it to be too obvious to be worth stating; Martin's explanation for the obviousness of the hidden doctrine is that its truth is revealed to phenomenological study.

But if, as I claim, Moore is explicit that he endorses the relational view on the basis of phenomenological study, this provides at least one piece of direct evidence for Martin's explanation.

[12] After all, in the roughly concurrently composed Moore 1902–3: 193–4, Moore endorses the doctrine from Moore 1899 that experience is judgement of an 'existential proposition' (in the 1899 paper Moore says that the object of *perception* is an existential

proposition, but in the 1902–3 paper, he is discussing the Kantian notion of 'experience', a sort of lumping together of sensation, perception, and thought). Moore quite possibly draws the Reidean distinction between sensation and perception, with the latter being a sort of 'interpretation' imposed upon the 'core' of the former; in today's literature it is common to elide, reject, or, at least, fail to presuppose this distinction.

[13] For discussion of the former, see fn. 17; for discussion of the latter, see fn. 22.

[14] 'To identify either ''blue'' or any other of what I have called ''*objects*'' of sensation, with the corresponding sensation is in every case, [. . .] to identify a part either with the whole of which it is a part or else with the other part of the same whole' (445).

While I will use the terminology of parthood in reporting Moore's view, Moore is quite sloppy in his use of logical and quasi-logical vocabulary with which we are today more careful, and so I doubt that appeal to any precise contemporary explication of the notion of parthood would be of much value in understanding Moore.

[15] Smith 2002: 55–6; 281n7, in an otherwise sensitive discussion of the notion of transparency, follows Ducasse 1942 in mistaking Moore's argument for 'his sense-datum analysis of experience' to end with this observation. Smith criticizes this alleged argument on the correct grounds that there are alternative explanations of the similarity and the difference. (Ducasse's presentation of the adverbial view as an alternative as a strategy of blocking this argument is also endorsed by Baldwin (Summer 2004), who writes 'it was not until the formulation of the 'adverbial' theory of experience by Ducasse in the 1940's, according to which someone who has a sensation of blue is someone who 'senses bluely', that there was a reasonably robust response to Moore's criticism.')

The thought seems to be that Moore only endorses the relational conception because he sees no alternative. But first, it is difficult to distinguish adverbialism from the rejected identity theory, about which more below (Robinson 1994: 182 seems to agree with my assessment that Moore would regard Ducasse's adverbialism as 'semi-idealistic', holding that 'sense-contents cannot exist unsensed'). And second, this overlooks the phenomenological case Moore makes for the relational view several pages later.

[16] A bit further down (445), Moore inflates the explanatory role of 'consciousness' from merely explaining what makes P_B and P_G phenomenal characters (what makes P_B experiences and P_G experiences be experiences) to playing an exhaustive role in making them 'mental'. Why couldn't the involvement of B or G also confer mentality on these entities?

[17] This passage recommends especially strongly being read as intending 'the sensation of blue' to be read as referring to P_B. Note that Moore takes C to be present in both 'the sensation of blue' and 'the sensation of green': so C is clearly a universal, and Moore gives no indication that B and G are not to be taken as on a par with C in terms of their metaphysical category. So, assuming that B is also a universal, if 'the corresponding sensation' were a *particular* sensation, the view would commit the 'self-contradictory error' of identifying a particular with a universal!

For a passage recommending another reading, see fn. 22.

[18] Moore offers a bit of evidence for this startling claim, namely that if some philosopher had made the distinction, we would not call secondary qualities 'sensations' (446).

[19] See fn. 16 for a bit more evidence that Moore intends this description to denote C.

[20] See fn. 15.

[21] This change of subject is marked by an especially bizarre aspect of the discussion. Moore claims that 'when a sensation [. . .] exists, [. . .] one answer has hitherto been given universally: That both ['consciousness' and the 'object', namely C and B] exist' (446). But

just a page earlier, Moore had written that 'no philosopher has ever yet succeeded in avoiding' the 'self-contradictory error' of identifying 'either ''blue'' or any other of what I have called ''*objects*'' of sensation, with the corresponding sensation' (445)! One suspects that Moore went to bed after writing the transparency passage and took the writing up again with the apology for digression.

In section 4.2, I discuss the relation between this view and the contemporary conception of content.

[22] These passages especially strongly recommend being read as intending 'the sensation of blue' to refer generically to particular sensations: the *property* of being a blue bead is not made of glass, but rather the particular blue bead is; in parallel, it is the particular P_B experience, rather than the property P_B, which is made of consciousness. For a passage recommending a different reading, see fn. 17.

[23] 'The true analysis of a sensation or idea is as follows. The element that is common to them all, and which I have called ''consciousness'', really *is* consciousness.'

[24] 'A sensation is, in reality, a case of ''knowing'' or ''being aware of'' or ''experiencing'' something.'

[25] See fn. 27.

[26] Here I am assuming that in Moore's view, no awareness of *B* is possible in the absence of awareness of an instance of *B*. (This goes against a view developed in Johnston 2004, on which one can be brutely aware of a property, even an uninstantiated property.) At least some weak evidence for this attribution is that, in retrospective remarks (Moore 1942: 658), Moore assimilates the question whether 'blue' can exist unperceived to the question whether any *instance* of 'blue' can exist unperceived, taking himself to have in 1903 have endorsed affirmative answers to both these questions.

An anonymous referee worries that this assumption is in tension with Moore's assertions that 'To have in your mind ''knowledge'' of blue, is *not* to have in your mind a ''thing'' or ''image'' of which blue is the content' (see fn. 29) and that 'To be aware of the sensation of blue is *not* to be aware of a mental image—of a ''thing,'' of which ''blue'' and some other element are constituent parts in the same sense in which blue and glass are constituents of a blue bead' (see fn. 32). The assumption may well force the admission of a sense-datum conception of experience, along lines discussed in section 1. Suppose it does. And suppose that sense-data are always mental entities, a contestable supposition, and one about which Moore was highly indecisive: see section 3.2. Even under these suppositions, the quoted assertions still seem safe:

(a) The sense-datum view under consideration entails, perhaps, that *when* one has knowledge of blue one has in one's mind a thing or image of which blue is the content. Still, the quoted assertions are expressed using the 'to *F* is (not) to *G*' locution, and thus most plausibly concern the *nature* of knowledge of blue, rather than its accompaniments. So there would be no conflict if one could coherently hold that the *nature* of knowledge of blue involves awareness of a sense-datum, while the mere presence of a sense-datum need not. The latter would be in trouble if for a sense datum to be present is for it to be perceived, but, as just discussed, Moore's retrospective remarks from 1942 suggest that in 1903 he rejects that view.

(b) As I argue in section 4.2, Moore seems to think of a mental image with blue as its content as an experience with the representational content that something blue is such-and-such; hence what is denied in the quoted assertions is that to have knowledge of blue is to have an experience with that representational content. Since a sense-datum is not an experience with representational content, there is no tension.

[27] 'And this awareness is not merely [. . .] itself something distinct and unique, utterly different from blue: it also has a perfectly distinct and unique relation to blue, a relation which is *not* that of thing or substance to content, nor of one part of content to another part of content. This relation is just that which we mean in every case by ''knowing'' '.

Lewis 1965: 116–7 takes the relation which consciousness bears to blue to be 'that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact' (446). (On his p. 118, Lewis appeals to p. 29 of the reprint in Moore's 1922 collection *Philosophical Studies* as evidence for the triadist interpretation; I cannot determine what passage on this page Lewis intends.) He also suggests that this *third* element is the 'intentionality of consciousness' (perhaps consciousness itself is intrinsic?). But adequately following up the anaphors in the transparency passage makes it clear that 'consciousness' *itself* is that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact (see also fn. 16).

Klemke 1969 advances a similar triadist interpretation of Moore (12), and also himself endorses triadism (15).

[28] 'This element [awareness-of] [. . .] is certainly neglected by the ''content'' theory: that theory entirely fails to express the fact that there is, in the sensation of blue, this unique relation between blue and the other constituent.'

[29] 'To have in your mind ''knowledge'' of blue, is *not* to have in your mind a ''thing'' or ''image'' of which blue is the content.'

[30] 'When we know that the sensation of blue exists, the fact we know is that there exists an awareness of blue.'

[31] 'It ['to be aware of the sensation of blue'] is to be aware of an awareness of blue; awareness being used, in both cases, in exactly the same sense.'

[32] 'To be aware of the sensation of blue is *not* to be aware of a mental image—of a ''thing'', of which ''blue'' and some other element are constituent parts in the same sense in which blue and glass are constituents of a blue bead.'

[33] On this alternative, *C* would also not be transparent: see Siewert 2004.

[34] According to O'Connor 1982: 29, Moore's case is that one cannot conclude that if *a* is a part of *b*, *a* cannot exist without *b*. O'Connor cites no passage as the source of this attribution, and it seems to me to be without textual basis.

[35] A nice question is whether *C*'s being a relation, as contrasted with *B*'s being intrinsic, explains the difference in the ease with which we can focus attention on them. In the passage discussed in fn. 15, Smith makes a case that there is such an explanation.

[36] It wouldn't be right to interpret 'blue' being an inseparable aspect of experiences as 'blue' being merely *actually* instantiated in experiences, since then Moore's hypothesis that 'blue' might 'turn out in every case, whether it be also the content or not, to be at least *not* an inseparable aspect of the experience' would amount to the hypothesis that blue might turn out in every case, whether it be instantiated in experience, to be at least not instantiated in experience—and that wouldn't make any sense.

[37] For example, 'They do not perceive that *esse* is *percipi* must, if true, be merely a self-evident synthetic truth' (440).

[38] Like Moore, let's not worry about the category of the things that can be assessed as necessary or analytic: sentences? propositions?

[39] Robinson 1994: 184 provides a somewhat similar interpretation of what Moore is up to in the second half of the paper.

[40] I discuss the phenomenological status of this view in Hellie 2006, 2007.

[41] For those who are having a hard time grasping what this could mean, I will try to give an illustrative example. On a representative realist or sense-datum conception of experience, seeing a blue book is rather like seeing a book on TV—just as in the latter case,

one sees the book in the phosphors of the TV screen, in the former case, one sees the book in the datum. Similarly, one sees the blueness of the book in some feature of the datum. And these might be distinct properties. Indeed, one might even fail to experience them simultaneously: one could say that when one sees a white card under diffuse blue light so that it looks white, one sees the card's whiteness in the datum's 'datum-blueness'. On seeing things in sense-data, see Hellie 2006.

[42] 'When we say of a tie that *it* is blue, we are, I think, almost certainly attributing to it a ''property,'' in Mr. Ducasse's sense, and *not* the quality which we attribute to ''sense-data'' such as an after-image.'

[43] 'In that early paper I really was asserting that the *sensible* quality ''blue'' [. . .] *could* exist without being perceived: that there was no contradiction in supposing it to do so.'

[44] For Moore's indecision, see for example Moore 1913–14, 1925, 1942; for Moore's final view, see Moore 1957: 136–7.

[45] Here 'one' is an indexical expression referring to the subject of the experience.

[46] This seems to be the interpretation advanced by Baldwin 1990: 18. Baldwin's Moore understands the copy theory to regard the resemblance as exact sharing of properties, so that only an *F* can represent an *F*, and regards this as the centerpiece of the content view, refuting the view on the ground that introspection does not demonstrate that his experience is blue (even though it is certainly *of* blue).

It seems to me that Baldwin's interpretation rests on an unjustifiably literal reading of the passage about the beard and the bead. Many sense-datum theorists—even the technically sophisticated and methodologically self-conscious Price (1932/1950: 3)—used colour adjectives indiscriminately as between datum qualities and surface qualities. Moreover, Moore's retrospective remarks from 1942 strongly suggest that this was his practice in the 1903 paper.

[47] Compare Russell's use of 'knowledge' to concern the relation of acquaintance in Russell 1905.

[48] Of course, many contemporary advocates of the broadness of representational content would deny this, taking something to be representably a certain way by one sometimes only if one is somehow related to that thing. But it is a nice question whether all content is broad; and the view that content is broad in this way wasn't on the philosophical radar screen in 1903.

[49] Though see fn. 4.

[50] Many contemporary philosophers assess other things for their transparency status: such as experience itself (e.g., Lormand 2006), or the phenomenal character of experience (e.g., Tye 2000), or intrinsic qualities of experience (e.g., Shoemaker 1990), or sense-data (e.g., Thau 2002).

[51] Many contemporary philosophers take *x*'s transparency to amount to something perhaps different: such as to *x*'s being such that any act of attention to it has an act of attention to something else as a part (e.g., Chalmers 2006); or to introspection's providing no evidence that *x* has any intrinsic quality, or that any internal entities are participants in *x* (e.g., Martin 2002).

[52] A great many contemporary philosophers take something in the rough neighborhood of perceptual experience to *be* transparent (e.g., Shoemaker 1990).

[53] See fn. 5 for work discussing this view.

[54] For significant recent uses of this methodology, see Siewert 1998; Martin 2002; Siegel 2006.

[55] On the negative side, see Chalmers 2003; Hellie 2006; John forthcoming; on the affirmative side see Martin 2002; Hellie 2007.

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