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PHENOMENAL CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION: THE REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY OF PHENOMENAL CHARACTER

When you look at the sky, you have what we may call for now a ‘blue experience’. It is customary to distinguish two aspects of this blue experience. On the one hand, the experience is *of* blueness, in that it *represents* something blue. On the other hand, the experience *feels* blue, if you will, in that there is a distinctive way it is like – from the inside, as it were – to undergo experiences of its type; this blue way-it-is-like is how the experience presents itself to introspection. We can call the former aspect of experience its *representational content*,¹ and the latter its *phenomenal character*. Let us accept this distinction, for now, as a *conceptual distinction*; whether it stands for a *real difference* is precisely the subject of this paper. I will focus on the case of visual color experience.²

This distinction has had bad press of late. The thesis that phenomenal character is just a species of representational content is becoming more and more popular. Crucial in this development has been what has come to be called ‘the transparency of experience’. This is, basically, the phenomenological observation that the only aspect of experience introspection seems to be able to access is its representational content.³ Thus when you introspect your blue experience, the only thing you take notice of is the blueness of the sky. When you shift the focus of your attention from the sky to your experience thereof, you are still looking at the sky. Where else would you look? Thus the blueness you are confronted with is represented – by your experience itself – as belonging to the sky, and there is nothing else to the experience that your introspection registers.

This observation became so powerful not only because it shows that introspection lends support to the representational account of phenomenal character. Introspective accessibility was supposed to be an *essential property* of phenomenal character; it is part of what we mean by phenomenal character that it is the aspect of experience that introspection can access.



Erkenntnis 57: 175–198, 2002.

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If what is essentially introspectively accessible is only representational content, then phenomenal character just *is* representational content.⁴

The popularity of the thesis of transparency has led to a proliferation of representationalist accounts of visual experience and its phenomenal character.⁵ Someone like Fred Dretske, who had developed an impressive account of mental representation in terms of teleo-informational relationships of nomic dependency between brain states and world states,⁶ can now claim that this account accommodates the phenomenal character of experience as well. However, his and other representational accounts persistently give rise – everything said and done – to a feeling that something essential has been left out in the process of their theorization of conscious experience; indeed, that it is the very experientiality of experience, if you will, that is missing. This feeling is most often brushed aside with one or another apologetic comment. In this paper, I am not going to offer a critique of Dretske's or any other representational account of phenomenal experience. Instead, I will pursue a different approach – not as widely discussed in the literature – which attempts to secure a prominent role of subjectivity in a representationalist account of experience. For if one *were* to try to calm down somewhat the persistent feeling of which I speak, presumably that would be the way one would go about doing it.⁷

The approach I will pursue stems out of Shoemaker's recent treatment of the problem of the inverted spectrum. I discuss the problem and its treatment in Section 2. In Section 3, I extend Shoemaker's strategy to Block's problem of Inverted Earth. I then state the general approach to experience emerging from the treatments of these two problems (Section 4). In Section 5, I criticize certain aspects of Shoemaker's account, and offer the requisite modification. Finally, I address an important argument, due to Michael Tye, against the whole approach (Section 6).

2. THE INVERTED SPECTRUM AND SHOEMAKER'S REPRESENTATIONALISM

How would one argue against the representational reduction of phenomenal character? The most straightforward way would be to point out metaphysically possible situations, in which two visual experiences differ in character but not in content, and/or conversely.

One such attempt is Shoemaker's argument from the *inverted spectrum*.⁸ Shoemaker argued that it is possible for two subjects to have visual spectra inverted relative to each other. When the first subject – Call her 'First' – looks at the sky, she has a phenomenal experience like yours, but when the second one – call her 'Second' – does, she has an experience

which is phenomenally like your (and First's) experience when you two look at bananas. Both First and Second call the color they experience the sky as having 'blue' (this is what they were taught to call it), so the phenomenal difference between their experiences does not show in their behavior. Moreover, the sky has only one color, and that is blue. Since neither First nor Second is misrepresenting the color of the sky, they must both be representing it as *blue*. Thus their experiences have the same representational content, even though these experiences appear differently to their introspections. We want to say that First's experience has a bluely feel and Second's has a yellowly feel, while both are experiences *of blue*.⁹ If so, feel and content cannot be identical.

There are several representationalist rejoinders one can try out in dealing with the inverted spectrum.¹⁰ The one I wish to discuss here was developed by Shoemaker himself (after changing his mind concerning the distinction between content and character) in order to reconcile the possibility of spectrum inversion with the transparency of experience, which he later came to appreciate more.¹¹ Shoemaker wants to hold, in accordance with the transparency of experience, that the features First and Second are introspectively aware of (and which therefore constitute the phenomenal character of their experiences) are features of the experienced sky. At the same time, Shoemaker is anxious to respect the introspective impressions of First and Second, and therefore to maintain that the phenomenal character of their experiences is different. So the phenomenal characters are different, but they consist nonetheless of features of external objects or surfaces. What sort of features could these be?

Let's look more closely at the way Shoemaker's reasoning proceeds. When First and Second look at the sky, First is introspectively confronted with feature F1, whereas Second is introspectively confronted with feature F2, where $F1 \neq F2$. (We can say that F1 is what blue things look like to you, whereas F2 is what yellow things look like to you.) In accordance with the transparency of experience, F1 and F2 are features of the represented sky, rather than of the representing of the sky. Moreover, neither First nor Second is misrepresenting, and therefore the sky really is both F1 and F2. At the same time, the sky has only one color, and therefore cannot be both blue and yellow. Therefore, F1 and F2 are *not* blueness and yellowness. What could F1 and F2 be, then? Shoemaker's answer is that F1 is the property of eliciting (or perhaps being disposed to elicit)¹² qualitative states Q1 (i.e., bluely qualia) in subjects, and F2 is the property of eliciting qualitative states Q2 (i.e., yellowly qualia) in subjects, where $Q1 \neq Q2$. (In fact, there is more than one way to construe the relevant sort of properties;¹³ for the purposes of the present discussion, this way

of construing them is the simplest and most straightforward. I will offer my own way of construing them in Section 4.) F1 and F2 are the sort of properties First and Second are directly aware of in visual experience, and they are *subject-relative properties*. By ‘subject-relative properties’ I mean relational properties of external objects and surfaces, such that the relevant other relatum is a sentient subject.¹⁴

Shoemaker’s view thus involves divorcing phenomenal character from qualia. Phenomenal character is just the representing of such subject-relative features as F1 and F2. By contrast, qualia are intrinsic properties of First and Second. Shoemaker calls F1 and F2 *phenomenal color properties* and Q1 and Q2 *qualia*. We can call F1 *phenomenal blue* and F2 *phenomenal yellow*, and an occurrence of Q1 and Q2 a *bluely quale* and a *yellowly quale* (respectively).¹⁵ What is important to remember is that these phenomenal properties are properties of the sky itself, not of experiences thereof. They are not the sort of phenomenal blue and phenomenal yellow that the sense datum theorist used to posit, for those were supposed to be properties that external things could not have, whereas these ones are properties *only* external objects can have.

3. SHOEMAKER’S REPRESENTATIONALISM AND INVERTED EARTH

No doubt Shoemaker’s brand of representationalism can be found objectionable on several grounds. We will review some possible objections later on. But first among them would be the suspicion that, since it is tailor-made to deal with the inverted spectrum case, it would be ill-fit to deal with other cases in which the representational and phenomenal aspects of experience are claimed to diverge. For instance, could it accommodate Block’s argument from Inverted Earth?¹⁶ In this section, I answer in the positive. This is significant, because the Inverted Earth argument is customarily taken to be the most serious challenge to representational theories of phenomenal experience. But although Shoemaker himself does not show how his account can accommodate the Inverted Earth, this can be done by simple extension from his treatment of the Inverted Spectrum.

In Block’s argument, we are asked to imagine a possible planet, exactly like Earth but with all the objects and surfaces on it having their complementary color. On that planet, ‘Inverted Earth’, grass is red, snow is black, and the sky is yellow. Block asks us also to imagine that, unbeknownst to us, we are captured one night by mad scientists who clothe us with color-inverting lenses and transport us to Inverted Earth. The two inversions – due to the lenses and due to the way the planet is – cancel each other out, and so our experience when looking at the sky is phenomenally the same as

it was on Earth, even though (at least after enough time had passed)¹⁷ our sky experiences represent yellowness rather than blueness. The point of this exercise is to uncover a metaphysically possible situation in which our experiences before and after the switch to Inverted Earth are phenomenally indistinguishable but representationally different.

We can simplify by supposing that Second has a functional Twin on Inverted Earth – call her “Tsecond” – who has the same color spectrum as Second. When Tsecond looks up at the Inverted sky, her experience represents a yellow object, but it has a bluely quality. Now compare Tsecond and First when looking (respectively) at the Inverted and Earthly skies. Their experiences are phenomenally the same but representationally different. So phenomenal character cannot be representational content.¹⁸

What is the threat the argument from Inverted Earth poses to representationalism? How is it different from the argument from the inverted spectrum? The representationalist identification of phenomenal character with representational content entails two complementary supervenience theses: (i) phenomenal character supervenes on representational content, and (ii) representational content supervenes on phenomenal character. The inverted spectrum case threatens (i), since it allegedly involves variation in phenomenal character without corresponding variation in representational content. In the Inverted Earth case, the inversions due to the lenses and due to the environment switch cancel each other out, so that the phenomenal character remains unchanged while the representational content changes (since the environment represented is changed). This situation involves, then, a variation in content without variation in character. It thus poses a threat to (ii).

It seems, however, that Shoemaker’s strategy for dealing with the inverted spectrum can be extended to the Inverted Earth.¹⁹ Recall that phenomenal blueness is the property of eliciting bluely qualia in subjects. This property is instantiated by the sky on Earth when a subject like First is looking at it. But it is also instantiated by the sky on Inverted Earth (‘Inverted sky’) when a subject like Tsecond is looking at it – precisely because Inverted sky elicits bluely qualia in Tsecond. Therefore, if phenomenal properties are what the sky experiences of First and Tsecond represent, then their experiences are representationally indistinguishable: they both represent phenomenal blueness.

The representational content of experience – when construed in the right way, that is, as featuring phenomenal properties exclusively – is thus shown to remain constant when the phenomenal character of experience is held constant through the two inversions that cancel each other out. Therefore, this representational content supervenes on phenomenal

character. In his treatment of the Inverted Spectrum scenario, Shoemaker showed that when the representational content of experience is construed in this way, phenomenal character is seen to supervene on representational content. Now we see that the converse holds as well: content supervenes on character, the Inverted Earth scenario notwithstanding. Shoemaker's kind of content guarantees more than Shoemaker realizes, then. The two-way supervenience ensures that phenomenal character and representational content covary perfectly. This suggests that Shoemaker's content can be deployed in a general account of the phenomenal character of visual experience.

4. TOWARDS A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF PHENOMENAL CONTENT

Call the sort of representational content that features only properties of eliciting certain qualia – that is, content featuring only phenomenal properties – *phenomenal content*. I submit the following thesis: For any experience *E*, the phenomenal character of *E* is one and the same as the phenomenal content *E* carries. Phenomenal character is thus a species of representational content.

This thesis seems to be immune *in principle* to the various threats to representationalism that inversion cases pose. For, every qualitative change is automatically – that is, conceptually – accompanied by a change in the phenomenal properties of the object represented (by definition of these phenomenal properties). So phenomenal content is bound to vary sensitively to possible qualia inversion scenarios.²⁰

We saw that whenever the internal qualitative properties of any two subjects are the same, the phenomenal content of their experiences are necessarily also the same. Thus phenomenal character supervenes also on the local intrinsic properties of the subject.²¹ That is, phenomenal character is *locally supervenient*. If we take local supervenience to be the criterion for an *internalist* account of phenomenal experience, then the approach developed here is internalist. In this sense, phenomenal content is *narrow content*.²² But the approach is internalistic also in a more straightforward sense: whereas other representationalist accounts attempt to get rid of reference to the intrinsic properties of the subject of experience in characterizing phenomenal character, the present one makes such reference necessary.²³

This feature of the account developed here – this combination of representationalism and internalism – will be attractive to those philosophers who wish to protect the role of *subjectivity* in experience individuation (as against currently popular externalist tendencies) within a representation-

alist framework. My guess is that this is what attracted Shoemaker in the first place. The proposed account construes phenomenal character as a kind of representational content – phenomenal content – but it also construes this content as mind-dependent in a fairly strong sense. Instantiations of phenomenal properties come into existence and go out of existence dependently of the subjective private qualia of the perceiver. In this way, subjective qualia dictate phenomenal content (hence character).²⁴ Phenomenal properties are subject-relative properties; so phenomenal content is subject-relative content.

For philosophers interested in protecting the role of subjectivity in experience individuation (such as myself), the combination of representationalism and internalism is not just an exercise in reconciling subjectivity with the theoretically impressive framework of the Representational Theory of Mind. It is a matter of providing a coherent account of phenomenology itself. Phenomenology teaches, that (i) inversions of phenomenal character which are accessible only to the introspective faculty of the subject of experience are possible, but also, that (ii) experience is transparent and hence essentially representational. The only way to preserve both these phenomenological observations in a single coherent account is through our type of internalist representationalism. Naturally, this account will appeal mostly to those philosophers who deem what may be called *phenomenological adequacy* the most important and most desirable aspect of a theory of phenomenal experience.

What the internalist and the externalist representationalists share is the view that the phenomenal character of the sky experience is given by a property of the sky. But they disagree on which property this is. According to the *internalist* representationalist, the relevant property is *phenomenal* blueness. According to the orthodox, *externalist* representationalist, it is the property of *objective* blueness. When you look at the sky, the sky has both properties: it is both objectively and phenomenally blue. But the disagreement is on which of the two properties the sky experience represents.²⁵

To appreciate the nature of internalist representationalism, let us examine more carefully the difference between objective and phenomenal color properties. The difference may be elucidated as follows. Objective blue is the property of *being blue*, whereas phenomenal blue is the property of *looking blue*, or *seeming blue*, or *appearing blue*. The property of *being blue* is an objective, mind-independent property of the sky, a property it would have even if there were no sentient creatures on earth. Different stories can be told about just what this property is. An obvious candidate is a story according to which being blue is a reflectance property. But not

much hangs on how the externalist representationalist chooses to construe 'being blue'. What is important is that according to the externalist representationalist, your sky experience represents that the sky *is* blue, not that the sky *looks* or *appears* blue.

What about the property of *looking blue*? The property I am really interested in here is the property of looking blue *to a given subject*, the property of looking blue *to subject x*. The property of looking blue to *x* is a property an object has iff it brings about a certain internal reaction in *x*. If *x*, upon looking at a brick (and *because* looking at the brick) undergoes the appropriate internal reaction, then the brick *looks* blue to *x*; it thereby instantiates the property of looking blue to *x*. How to characterize the internal reaction in question is an important question I would like to return to later on. Now, hereafter I will use the expression 'looks blue', period, when it will not matter to the discussion who the subject is. But for the property of looking blue to be instantiated, there must always *be* an individual subject - by definition of the property. It is, in that sense, a *mind-dependent* property: it cannot be instantiated in the absence of an individual mind.

The properties of being blue and of looking blue are normally co-instantiated. But divergences occur: some objects which are not blue *look* blue and some objects which *are* blue do not *look* blue. The latter cases are easy to come by: a blue object is blue even if nobody looks at it. If nobody looks at it, it looks blue to nobody. But it still *is* blue. That is, it still bears the relevant reflectance property. Harder to come by are cases where an object looks blue without being blue. A banana is not blue, but it looks blue to a subject donning spectrum-inverting lenses. More commonly, a pointillist painting may have no blue dots in it at all, and still look (homogeneously) blue to us from the right distance.²⁶

What if someone believes that being blue is itself a mind-dependent property? There is, of course, a venerable philosophical tradition of analyzing *being blue* in terms of *looking blue*, that is, of construing the property of being blue as a *secondary quality*.²⁷ In this tradition, one usually starts with a certain conception of color experiences and then proceeds to explicate colors themselves in reference to the color experiences they produce in the normal perceiver under normal conditions. I have no quarrel with this view. What I do claim, though, is that anyone who takes this view *has no choice* but to be an internalist representationalist. In a way, the whole point of Shoemaker's approach to color experience is that one need not couple it with a secondary quality approach to colors, or indeed with *any* approach to colors. The features color experiences represent are phenomenal colors. How phenomenal colors relate to colors is something our theory of color

experiences remains silent about. One need not wed oneself to any conception of the metaphysics of colors in order to accept our account about color experiences and their content.

Our account of phenomenal experience is not intended to accommodate only color experiences. Corresponding to all (objective) color properties, there are *color-look* properties, or phenomenal color properties. But this extends to shape properties as well: corresponding to the property of *being square*, there is the property of *looking square*. In general, all visible properties will have such look properties corresponding to them. Presumably, the same goes for perceptible properties in other modalities. Thus, corresponding to the property of *being sweet* is the property of *tasting sweet*. Just as the sky has both *a color* and *a look*, so a lemon has both *a flavor* and *a taste*, and an almond tree both *an odor* and *a smell*. With each of these pairs, the former is an ‘objective’ property, while the other is *subject-relative*. When we talk about tastes and smells, it always makes sense to ask ‘to whom?’ – as in ‘to whom does the chocolate taste bitter?’; but it does not make sense to ask the same of flavors or odors – as in ‘to whom is the chocolate’s flavor bitter?’. Corresponding to every perceptible property, then, is an *appearance property*, or *phenomenal property*. The appearance of an object is determined by the set of all its phenomenal properties.

To conclude, according to externalist representationalism, when you look at the sky, the representational content of your visual experience (which also constitutes its phenomenal character) is something like ⟨the sky is blue⟩. According to internalist representationalism, by contrast, the content is more like ⟨the sky looks blue to me⟩.²⁸ This is not to say, though, that when you have the sky experience, you have a verbal image of those words running in your head, or that you would be inclined to report the experience in those words. Nor is it to say that in being aware that the sky looks blue to you, you must be aware also that that is an extrinsic property of the sky, let alone be aware of the various relata.²⁹ It is simply to say that your experience represents the sky to instantiate the property of looking blue to you.

5. INTERNALIST REPRESENTATIONALISM AND THE NATURE OF QUALIA

There are all kinds of criticism one could level against internalist representationalism of the variety here defended. Because the account’s main virtue is what we have called its ‘phenomenological adequacy’, however, the most disturbing criticism would be that, in reality, it fails to “save

the phenomenological appearances". In the next section, we will consider just such criticism, namely, the accusation that internalist representationalism resurrects the 'veil of appearances' between color experience and the colorful world. But before doing so, I would like to examine another forceful line of criticism, which is less pertinent to the issue of phenomenological adequacy but looms large over the plausibility of internalist representationalism.

Consider the objection that internalist representationalism offers only illusory progress in our understanding of phenomenal experience. We started out with an intuitive distinction between representational content and phenomenal character. Then we argued against this distinction, but in the process we have reintroduced a distinction between phenomenal character and inner qualia. The former is now identified with representational content, while the latter are intrinsic properties of the subject. But isn't this just the same old distinction, newly termed? At least, doesn't it reinstate a distinction between what is going on on the *inside*, as it were, of the experiencing subject and what relates to the *outside*? More disturbingly, the representationalist account of phenomenal character is advantageous insofar as it paves the way to a familiar naturalization of it (through reduction to some natural causal relation), but with our internalist version of representationalism, a naturalization of phenomenal character will leave behind those mysterious qualia. The source of the mysteriousness of conscious experience has only been relocated.

This objection would be on the right track if the initially mysterious properties of phenomenal experience showed up again as properties of Shoemaker's qualia. But according to Shoemaker, this is not the case. Qualia themselves do not have phenomenal feel and there is nothing it is like for the subject to have them. These properties – feel and what-it-is-like-ness – are only properties of phenomenal characters. And although the phenomenal character of an experience is determined by the qualia it involves, there is nothing it is like for the subject to have these qualia. The subject does not feel her qualia; all she feels is the phenomenal properties defined in terms of qualia.³⁰ Nor can the subject introspectively access her qualia. In line with the transparency of experience, the only thing she can access is, again, the phenomenal content of her experiences. Thus Shoemaker's distinction between qualia and phenomenal character is very far from paralleling the old distinction – as conceived originally – between phenomenal character and representational content.

At this stage, the reader may wonder why Shoemaker insists on calling the intrinsic properties underlying phenomenal experiences 'qualia'. If they cannot be felt or introspectively accessed, and there is nothing

it is like to have them, then they involve no quality, and the appellation 'qualia' becomes arbitrary. What continuing to call them 'qualia' masks, however, is that we have no clear conception of what these intrinsic properties are. The reason Shoemaker calls them qualia is that they are intrinsic properties of experience that underlie and determine the representational content of experience. And this is what qualia were originally supposed to do. But originally, they were supposed to do that precisely by virtue of their phenomenal feel. Qualia, as originally conceived, were supposed to be non-representational inner *sensations* that the subject feels. But given the transparency of experience, the internalist representationalist cannot embrace this conception of qualia. Nor, of course, can she construe qualia in representational terms, on pain of circularity. This leaves it unclear what qualia are and how they underlie the representational content of experience.

According to Shoemaker, qualia are functional role properties of experience. Your experience of the sky involves a blue quality in virtue of the functional relationships of similarity and dissimilarity it entertains with other color experiences.³¹ Presumably, Shoemaker would suggest that qualia underlie representational content in the same way the functional role of propositional attitudes underlies their content within the Language of Thought framework.³²

The obvious problem with Shoemaker's conception of qualia is that it resurrects the problem of inverted qualia, which the account was designed to avoid. Recall that in the inverted spectrum scenario, the sky experiences of First and Second have the same functional role. So the sky elicits experiences with the same functional role in First and Second. If qualia are indeed functionally definable, then the sky is eliciting the same qualia in First and Second. If so, the phenomenal content of First's and Second's experiences is the same. But Shoemaker wants to hold that they are different.

My own suggestion is to construe qualia in terms of the material realization of phenomenal experiences. While it is easy to conceive of a scenario in which qualia are inverted but functional roles remain intact, it is difficult to conceive of a scenario in which qualia are inverted but the neurophysiological underpinning of experience remains the same. In fact, the supervenience of qualia on matter excludes the possibility of such a scenario. To insist that such a scenario is metaphysically possible is to deny qualia-matter supervenience and effectively renounce materialism. So a materialist would be safe to assume that qualia cannot be inverted without affecting the neurophysiological realization of experiences. Construing

qualia in neurophysiological terms thus ensures that qualia inversion will always imply phenomenal content inversion.

It may be objected that this construal of qualia is at odds with the principle of multiple realizability. Phenomenal experiences are presumably multiply realizable: human experiences are realized in neural substrate, Martian experiences are realized in silicon, and Venutian experiences are realized in chewing gum. Yet they may all share the same phenomenal character. But given that the sky elicits different qualia, as presently conceived, in humans, Martians, and Venutians, the phenomenal content of their experiences is different.

My rejoinder is twofold. In the first instance, there is no need to construe qualia chauvinistically, in terms of the specifically human material realization of experiences. Instead, we can construe them in terms of *disjunctive* types of material realizations. These types will cover the relevant neurophysiological states, silicon states, and chewing gum states that may realize phenomenal experiences, in such a way that the sky will be shown to elicit tokens of the same disjunctive type in human, Martian, and Venutian subjects undergoing the same phenomenal experience. Personally, however, I am not at all bothered by the objection at hand, because I reject much of the common wisdom on matters of multiple realizability, and in fact hold that mental states are most probably not multiply realizable. On my view, defended elsewhere, whether a feature is multiply realizable depends on whether it is multiply realized (i.e., has multiple realizations in the actual world). Water is *not* multiply realizable. It is not the case that water is realized in H₂O here and in XYZ on Twin-Earth; rather, water is uniquely realizable in H₂O and anything realized in something else is simply not water. Jade, by contrast, is multiply realizable. It is realized in NaAl(SiO₃)₂ and in CaMg₅(OH)₂(Si₄O₁₁)₂ here³³ and in ZYX elsewhere. The difference between water and jade is that the latter, but not the former, is multiply realized. Similarly, whether mental states are multiply realizable depends on whether they are multiply realized. And there is every empirical reason to think they are not. I conclude that there is no problem involved in construing qualia in terms of the neurophysiological realizations of phenomenal experiences.³⁴

To conclude this section, Shoemaker's account of phenomenal experiences is ultimately inadequate. But it fails only in its details. The overall account I would like to defend features the following tenets. (i) Phenomenal character is a kind of representational content. (ii) The relevant kind of content features only phenomenal properties of external objects, that is, properties of eliciting a distinctive internal reaction in the subject. (iii) The internal reaction is to be construed in terms of the neurophysiological

realization of the experience. So my own account shares with Shoemaker's tenets (i) and (ii), and is in disagreement with Shoemaker's only with regards to tenet (iii).

6. PHENOMENAL CONTENT, OBJECTIVE CONTENT, AND THE VEIL OF APPEARANCES

Michael Tye has recently offered a comprehensive critique of Shoemaker's approach to phenomenal experience.³⁵ The central theme in this critique is, so far as I can tell, that on this approach (which Tye calls 'moderate representationalism'), colors "are not basically seen"³⁶ (since it is the corresponding phenomenal color properties that are), and this "effectively draws a veil over the colors".³⁷ The problem is particularly acute for my own version, since I have construed phenomenal properties as properties of *appearing so-and-thus*, a construal which invites the veil-of-appearance objection. According to Tye, phenomenology teaches that colors, not their appearances, are what we perceive. Every perceiver would tell you so; to claim otherwise would be therefore to commit to an *error theory*.³⁸ An error theory is always a non-starter, but it is particularly embarrassing for an approach that made its respect to intuitive phenomenology its prime goal and its main virtue.³⁹ In this section, I argue that while there is an important sense in which, on our approach, objective colors are not 'basically seen', no veil of appearances is thereby drawn over the colors.

In dealing with the charge of 'veil of appearances', it is important to get clear on just what the charge is. One thing Tye may mean is that our approach erects an appearance/reality distinction for colors, where such distinction is untoward. But the application of an appearance/reality distinction to colors is only the mark of an objectivist metaphysics of colors, and Tye himself propounds such objectivism.⁴⁰ According to color objectivism, there are objective, mind-independent facts about colors. If there are objective facts about colors, then any subject may get those wrong, and when she does, things will appear to her to have colors that in reality they do not have.

The 'veil of appearance' objection must mean something else, then. That there should *be* an appearance/reality distinction for colors is unobjectionable to an objectivist such as Tye. What may be objectionable is the notion that we can only *know* what color things *appear* to have, never what color they *really* have. Perhaps this is Tye's objection: that it follows from our internalist representationalism that objective colors are unknowable, and only phenomenal colors can be known. So interpreted (epistemologically rather than metaphysically), Tye's charge may come down to the

claim that if internalist representationalism is right, our knowledge would be forever restricted, in some principled way, to appearances of colors; and that it is in this sense that the theory draws a veil over real colors.

So interpreted, however, Tye's charge is clearly misguided. It is perhaps true that on the view here defended we cannot *experience* objective colors; we shall revert to this issue momentarily. But in any event it does not follow that we couldn't *know* objective colors – say, by inference from our visual experiences. On this model, when you look at the sky, your experience represents that the sky *appears* blue; from this experience you then infer that the sky *is* blue.

Consider the following case. You look at a white wall, and the wall appears white to you. That is, you experience it to instantiate phenomenal whiteness. Then your friend shines a pink light on the wall. The wall then appears pink to you: your experience represents it to be phenomenally pink. Yet you are well aware that the wall did not change its color and you can *see* that your friend is shining pink light on it. From the evidence in your disposal, you infer that the wall is still white, and thereby acquire the belief that the wall *is* white, despite the fact that it *appears* pink. If your belief that the wall *is* white is true, justified, and Gettier-proof, then your belief constitutes knowledge of the wall's real color. Such knowledge can always, and quite easily, be acquired. There is no impenetrable veil of appearances over objective colors.

Perhaps the only defensible part of Tye's objection is the point that real colors cannot be experienced. To my mind, this in itself is no embarrassment to a theory of visual experience and its intentionality. The proper content of visual experience is indeed phenomenal content: content to the effect that things appear so-and-thus. That experience represents only the way things appear to be is why *thinking* is cognitively needed, as an instrument that takes us beyond the way things seem to the way they really are. It is only the contents of *beliefs* that concern the way things really are. This point goes all the way back to Plato and Aristotle. When we look at the moon, Aristotle points out, the moon appears to be one inch across. But to perceive the moon as appearing one inch across is not to be under an illusion. It is only when the experience is endorsed by a *judgement* to the effect that the moon really is one inch across that one falls into error.

This set of observations may suffice to counter Tye's objection from the veil of appearances. According to Shoemaker, however, it is not even true that we do not experience objective colors. Or so, at least, the following passage suggests:⁴¹

To a first approximation, an object's having a phenomenal color property just is its looking a certain way to certain perceivers in virtue of having certain color, and this normally

amounts to the color of the object presenting itself in one of the ways it can present itself So, it is quite wrong to say . . . that colors “are not basically seen”.

What Shoemaker has in mind here is perhaps this. The objective color of the sky, which we may as well call *objective blueness*, is a property that involves a disposition to elicit, in normal circumstances, (i) bluely qualia in subjects with the kind of qualitative spectrum First has, (ii) yellowly qualia in subjects with the kind of qualitative spectrum Second and Tsecond have, (iii) some third kind of qualia in subjects with a third kind of qualitative spectrum,⁴² etc. Recall now that phenomenal blueness is the property of eliciting bluely qualia in subjects, and phenomenal yellowness is the property of eliciting yellowly qualia. Thus the co-instantiation of objective blueness and phenomenal blueness, when a subject like First is present, is far from being accidental or contingent; it is dictated by the conceptual connection between these two properties. In the presence of First, phenomenal blueness is instantiated *in virtue* of objective blueness being instantiated. If blueness was not instantiated, then a subject like First could not have entered a bluely qualitative state (although a subject like Second could). So given her color spectrum, First’s experience of phenomenal blueness is *conditioned* by the presence of objective blueness. Second’s experience of phenomenal yellowness is likewise conditioned by the presence of objective blueness. If the sky was not objectively blue, then it would not be phenomenally yellow in the presence of Second. Thus in Second’s presence, it is phenomenally yellow *in virtue* of being objectively blue.⁴³

Given this, we can claim that *by* (or *in virtue of*) seeing the sky as phenomenally blue, First also sees the sky as objectively blue. And, *by* (or *in virtue of*) seeing the sky as phenomenally yellow, Second also sees it as objectively blue.⁴⁴ This ‘by’ or ‘in virtue of’ relation between seeing phenomenal colors and seeing objective colors derives from the ‘by virtue’ relation holding between the instantiations of phenomenal color properties and of objective color properties: given that the sky looks blue to First, it cannot be but blue; and given that it looks yellow to Second, it cannot be but blue. The upshot is that, in an important sense, we do experience objective colors. We do not experience them *directly* (as with phenomenal colors), but we do experience them *indirectly*.

This sort of talk of ‘seeing *x* by seeing *y*’ is reminiscent of the currently unpopular representative theory of perception and other versions of indirect realism. In these theories, what are being *directly* experienced are features of inner objects (sense data), which stand proxy for features of ordinary objects in the external world. Features of these external objects are only *indirectly* experienced. One experiences the external world *by*,

or *in virtue of*, experiencing inner proxies. One experiences the blueness of the sky *by*, or *in virtue of*, experiencing the blueness of an inner sense datum. This theory has been largely discarded (and justifiably so), mainly because of the suspect ontological status of inner sense data, as well as phenomenological considerations not very different from the transparency of experience.⁴⁵ Our internalist representationalism reintroduces the distinction between directly and indirectly experienced features, but avoids the pitfalls of sense datum theory. Phenomenal colors are directly experienced, whereas objective colors are only indirectly experienced, but both are properties of the same external objects. The appropriate analogy here is to cases where we experience one external object *by*, or *in virtue of*, experiencing *another external object*, e.g., in the way one can smell a rose *by* smelling the rose odor, hear a coach *by* hearing the sound it produces, or see one's house *by* seeing one's house's front façade.⁴⁶ Thus in addressing the objection from the veil of appearances, we can deploy impressive work by representative theorists of perception – notably, work by Frank Jackson⁴⁷ – on how the 'in virtue of' locution works in these contexts, and how the distinction between direct and indirect experience could play out, without having to embrace sense data.

The general idea behind this treatment of the veil problem, then, is to distinguish two kinds of representational content carried by color experiences – *phenomenal* content, featuring phenomenal color properties, and *objective* content, featuring objective color properties – and claim that experience carries, *immediately*, phenomenal content, and only *mediately*, objective content. An experience carries the objective content it does only by virtue of carrying the phenomenal content it does. Moreover, although experience carries two contents, only its phenomenal content is identical with its phenomenal character, while its objective content can vary insensitively to its character. Thus phenomenal character underlies, but does not determine, objective content.

This account anchors our response to the veil of appearances objection. To say that visual experience carries not only phenomenal content, but also objective content, is to say that the properties featured in objective content – namely, objective properties – are also objects of experience. Therefore, objective colors *are* seen, on this account, at least in the sense in which houses are seen and roses are smelled. This, I take it, is the only sense phenomenology has anything to say about. So internalist representationalism is not at odds with phenomenology.⁴⁸ Furthermore, even if objective colors were not seen, it would still be possible to obtain knowledge of them by inference from what is seen. So our account of color experience does not involve any principled difficulty for knowledge of objective colors.

7. CONCLUSION: THE CASE FOR INTERNALIST REPRESENTATIONALISM

According to the internalist representationalism defended in this paper, the phenomenal character of experience is given by the phenomenal properties represented by experience. These are properties of eliciting such-and-such inner qualia, where qualia are construed as intrinsic, non-representational properties of the material realizers of experiences. This internalist representationalism will appeal to those who wish to construe phenomenal experience as essentially representational, but also as locally supervenient and as essentially subjective. It is immune in principle to alleged counterexamples that employ scenarios of qualia inversion, as well as to other accusations of phenomenological inadequacy. This is not to say, of course, that it does not suffer from weaknesses and problems of its own, some of them truly formidable; but given its superiority over externalist approaches to conscious experience along the all-important dimension of phenomenological adequacy, it is – to my mind – under-pursued in today’s philosophy of mind.

NOTES

¹ This aspect is often referred to under the heading ‘intentional content’ or ‘intentional object’. I will stick to talk of representational content, but I don’t suppose anything I am going to say cannot be said using those idioms as well.

² This is mainly because the issues that will concern me here present themselves most vividly in the case of visual experience. It is very likely that our results would carry over to the case of other modes of perceptual experience. There is some intuitive resistance, on the other hand, to considering the case of bodily experiences, such as pain, and emotional experiences, such as anger, as structurally on a par with perceptual experiences. But as I said, I am not going to touch on these issues at all here.

³ Gilbert Harman (1990) has been very influential in making the thesis of transparency widely accepted. He writes: “Eloise is aware of the tree that she is now seeing. So we can suppose that she is aware of some features of her current visual experience. In particular, she is aware that her visual experience has the feature of being an experience of seeing a tree. That is to be aware of an intentional feature of her experience; she is aware that her experience has a certain content. On the other hand, I want to argue that she is not aware of those intrinsic features of her experience by virtue of which it has that content”. (Harman 1990, 667. I am quoting from the reprint in Block et al. (1997). Many of the papers I will discuss here are conveniently grouped in that volume. When that is the case, I shall refer to the reprint there.)

⁴ The argument would proceed as follows, then. The only introspectively accessible properties of conscious experience are their representational properties; the only properties that are relevant to the type-individuation of conscious experiences are their introspectively ac-

cessible properties; therefore, the only properties that are relevant to the type-individuation of conscious experiences are their representational properties.

⁵ Dretske (1995, 1996); Tye (1992, 1995, 2000); Lycan (1987, 1996); and more.

⁶ See Dretske (1981, 1986).

⁷ I speak here of the *feeling* that representationalist accounts fail to capture the subjectivity of conscious experience. For an *argument* to this effect, see Kriegel (2002) (especially Section 2).

⁸ Shoemaker (1981).

⁹ In the original piece, Shoemaker (1981) takes this case to establish a distinction between what he called ‘intentional content’ and ‘qualitative content’. Back when he wrote it, Shoemaker meant this terminology to parallel my talk of quality vs. of-ness. Since then he has changed his view, and has introduced some distinctions, which we will get to soon enough. I choose to speak in terms of quality and of-ness, for now, because this more casual sounding terminology allows to hover more consistently over his approaches to the inverted spectrum before and after he changed his mind. Why I am using the awkward adverbs ‘bluely’ and ‘yellowly’ will emerge later.

¹⁰ We can distinguish three lines of representationalist rebuttal. First, one can deny the genuine metaphysical possibility of inverted spectra; call this the *hard anti-phenomenalist line*. This approach insists that Second has an experience that has a bluely quality, since it represents a blue expanse. What’s wrong with this approach is that it dismisses rather arbitrarily what introspection teaches Second herself. Another approach would have it that the phenomenal difference is accompanied by a representational difference, because one of the experiences is non-veridical; call this the *soft anti-phenomenalist line*. This approach, defended mainly by Lycan (1996) and Tye (2000), concedes that Second’s experience has yellowly quality, but claims that it also (mis)represents yellowness. What this approach denies in the argument from the inverted spectrum is that neither First nor Second are misrepresenting. If Second’s experience when she looks at the sky is yellowly, then there is something wrong about Second. We all have a bluely experience when we look at the sky, and the sky is after all blue. In having systematically inverted experiences, Second is proving to be a perceptual freak, a freak who misrepresents her environment. The weakness of this approach is that it loses its plausibility when we consider massive inversions. What if every other sentient organism had their spectrum inverted? What if half of humanity, when looking at the sky, had an experience which feels the way yours and First’s feels when you look at bananas? What if First and you were all alone in having these bluely experiences looking at the sky, and everybody else had yellowly experiences? It is of course possible to insist (and has been insisted, e.g., by Tye) that even in such a case, everybody except you two would just be getting it wrong. But we shouldn’t mistake this for a view that intuition recommends (as may seem when we consider only isolated inversion). The third approach is the one I discuss in the main body of the text; we can call it the *pro-phenomenalist line*, for reasons that will come out in the text.

¹¹ Shoemaker (1994a, b).

¹² Shoemaker appears not to be to eager to choose among these two options: whether the properties like F1 and F2 are occurrent or dispositional. When he does address the question, he tends to prefer the occurrent version. Thus: “. . . if R is the quale that characterizes my experiences of red things, the phenomenal properties [such as F1 and F2] would include the property something has just in case it is currently producing an R-experience in someone related to it in a certain way This, unfortunately, is a *property nothing has when it is not being perceived*” (Shoemaker 1994b, 298; Italics mine).

¹³ See discussion in Shoemaker (1994a, 27–28).

¹⁴ So the property of phenomenal blueness is a *relational property* of the sky, where the relevant other relatum is necessarily a sentient creature. As such, this property cannot be instantiated in the absence of a sentient creature. Indeed, it comes into existence and goes out of existence together with the internal states of the subject. Wherefore it is a mind-dependent property. It is mind-dependent in the *weak* sense that its instantiation depends on certain facts about minds, not in the *strong* sense that its instantiation somehow occurs ‘inside a mind’ (whatever that would mean). Phenomenal properties are not properties of inner objects of the sort sense datum theorists used to posit. They are simply relational properties of ordinary external objects, where the relevant other relatum is an internal reaction of a subject.

¹⁵ It is because qualia, as construed in the present context, are essentially intrinsic, non-relational properties that I use these adverbs in labeling them. The point of the adverbial theory of perception (Chisholm 1957) was to get rid of sense data as intentional objects of perceptual experiences. So the adverbial form is supposed to carry a presumption, or at least connotation, of non-relationality, and that is why I am talking of ‘bluely qualia’. This presumption or connotation is, by the way, *all* I wish to preserve from the adverbial theory.

¹⁶ Block (1990). Block also develops another version of the argument (Block 1996), which he takes to be an improvement on the old one. But the second one is more complicated and will not add to the issues I want to discuss here.

¹⁷ This depends on certain externalist assumptions about representational content and the way it is determined (see Putnam 1975). I am going to offer a simplification of the story in the next paragraph of the text that will make these assumptions unnecessary.

¹⁸ This way of setting the example may be claimed to be more complex, in that it introduces inter-subjective inversion, whereas the former was confined to intra-subjective inversion. But I have already accepted the metaphysical possibility of inter-subjective inversion in Section 2. That aside, this version is clearly simpler in that the messy details about the history of the same trans-planetary traveler need not be fixed to get the problem going. In that way it also does not, by itself, introduce externalist assumptions about content of the sort Block must avail himself in his version.

¹⁹ The hard and soft anti-phenomenalist lines can also be extended to deal with this case. On the hard line, Tsecond’s experience has a yellow quality, and hence the difference in representational content is accompanied by a phenomenal difference. On the soft line, the opposite is true: the representational content of Tsecond’s experience is not yellow but blue – it simply misrepresents the real color of the sky on Inverted Earth. The weaknesses of these lines of rebuttal, too, are the same as when applied to the inverted spectrum.

²⁰ The mark of a representational theory of phenomenal character is that it makes character covary with representational content with metaphysical necessity. Note that the covariation of phenomenal character and phenomenal content holds with more than just metaphysical necessity. Because phenomenal content has been *defined* in terms of the internal reactions of subjects, the necessity is definitional, or analytical. Such analytical necessity *entails* metaphysical necessity, so the minimum claim of a representational theory of character has been established.

²¹ It is important not to confuse here supervenience relations between representational content and phenomenal character and supervenience relations between phenomenal character and the intrinsic properties of the subject. It is possible to hold that content supervenes on character, but both fail to supervene on intrinsic profile.

²² The notion of narrow content has been originally introduced in the context of a tension between externalism about mental content and the presumed causal efficacy of mental states. According to externalism, mental content is partly determined by factors that are external to the subject. Two subjects who are indistinguishable as far as their non-relational properties are concerned may harbor mental states with different contents. This has been taken to threaten the idea that mental states can affect our behavior in virtue of their contents. Since what determines behavior is internal to the behaving subject, and cannot be different between two subjects who are indistinguishable as far as their non-relational properties are concerned, there must be an aspect to content that is irrelevant to behavior. According to certain philosophers (e.g., Burge 1986), this threat is illusory. But according to others (e.g., Fodor 1987, ch. 2), it is very real, and should be dealt with by introducing the notion of narrow content. If it is true that the external factors determining content are irrelevant to behavior, then there must be some different sort of content which is determined purely by the non-relational properties of the subject and is in that sense 'locally supervenient'. We must distinguish between the *wide content* of a mental state, which is the full content of the state, on the one hand, and *narrow content*, which is a purely internal content, on the other hand. When a mental state causes action, it is in virtue of its narrow content that it causes action. So narrow content is the psychologically important kind of content. The introduction of narrow content can thus help secure the causal relevance of content to behavior. But in the present context, it can be used to account for the fact that the content of our conscious experiences is in some very basic sense internal and subjective. Georges Rey has defended this idea for a long time (for the latest exposition, see Rey (1998)), and recently Horgan and Tienson (2002) made another attempt along these lines. Philosophers who oppose the introduction of the notion of narrow content often complain that the notion is incoherent, inasmuch as narrow content is 'not really a kind of content'. A full discussion of this objection will take us too far afield. Personally, I am not worried by this objection. Compelling argumentation against it can be found in Segal (2000).

²³ This feature is so rare in representationalist accounts of phenomenal experience, that discussions of representationalism often proceed on the assumption that any representationalist account is, as such, externalist. Tye, for instance, makes Shoemaker out to be 'both a representationalist and an anti-representationalist'. He writes: "Shoemaker is both a representationalist and an antirepresentationalist: he accepts that phenomenal character is representational but he denies that a full account of phenomenal character can avoid intrinsic qualities of experience" (Tye 2000, 100–101).

²⁴ Shoemaker writes: "...the phenomenal character we are confronted with in color experience is due not simply to what there is in our environment but also, in part, to *our* nature, namely the nature of our sensory apparatus and constitution" (1994a, 24; 1994b, 294; *Italics original*).

²⁵ Or rather, the question is this: in virtue of representing which property does the experience have the phenomenal character it does? One can accept that it simply represents both phenomenal and objective colors. But only one of its representational contents can be identical with phenomenal character.

²⁶ This example was suggested to me John Hyman. Another case in which an object is not blue but looks blue is when someone misperceives it to be blue, say, because that person is under the influence of a hallucinogen. But I prefer leaving out cases of misrepresentation here. Such cases introduce specific puzzles that need not concern us when our task is to validate the distinction between being blue and looking blue.

²⁷ The dispositionalist view, emanating from Locke's secondary quality theory, is the main player here. According to this view, being blue is simply the disposition to look blue.

²⁸ I am using the notation $\langle p \rangle$ to represent mental contents. In using this notation, however, I do not mean to suggest that the contents of mental states must be propositional.

²⁹ When one is aware of an object's relational property, one need not necessarily be aware *that* it is a relational property, let alone be aware *of* all the relevant relata. For instance, when one is aware that the book is heavy, one is not necessarily aware that its heaviness is a relational property, let alone become aware of the gravitational force of the Earth, to which the book's heaviness is relative.

³⁰ Shoemaker writes: "In the sense in which there is something seeing red is like, there is nothing qualia are like" (1994a, 29–30).

³¹ Shoemaker writes: "Qualia I take to be the features of experiences in virtue of which they stand in these relations of phenomenal similarity and difference If, as I have said, the relations of phenomenal similarity and difference are functionally definable, then we should also be able to define in functional terms what the identity conditions of qualia are, and what it is to be a quale" (Shoemaker 1994b, 306; see also Shoemaker 1994a, 29). That the notion of a quale is functionally definable is something Shoemaker has been arguing for at least since 1975 (see Shoemaker 1975), although back then he took qualia to be the same as the phenomenal characters of experiences.

³² See Fodor (1975). This is the old functionalist idea of the brain as syntactic engine driving a semantic engine that is the mind. Explaining this outlook in greater detail will take us too far afield. For discussion, I recommend Haugeland (1978).

³³ These are the molecular compositions, respectively, of jadeite and nephrite.

³⁴ The resulting conception of the phenomenal properties figuring in phenomenal content is this: appearing F to subject x is understood to involve the eliciting in x of a distinctive neurophysiological state. For a similar account of appearing F , see Spohn (1997).

³⁵ Tye (2000, ch. 5).

³⁶ Tye (2000, 103).

³⁷ *Ibid.* Further counter-intuitive consequences are supposed to follow from this one (e.g., that it would be possible for colors to be absent when the relevant relational properties are present). I am not going to discuss all these possible ramifications of Tye's objection, but try to attack it in its heart.

³⁸ The notion of error theory was introduced to philosophical discourse by J. L. Mackie (1977), in his discussion of an argument for moral realism, an argument he called 'the argument from phenomenology'. The argument is that phenomenologically, values present themselves as objective and mind-independent. Mackie's rejoinder is that phenomenology is, in this case, systematically wrong, and all our intuitive judgements about the status of values are erroneous across the board.

³⁹ An error theory may sometimes be true. Take the following scenario from Mackie (1976, 44): "What if someone ever since birth had had a large box attached in front of his eyes, for him to see, fairly faithful pictures of outside, surrounding things were somehow produced?" Mackie says, correctly I believe, that "he would surely take himself to be visually directly aware of the very things he stepped on and picked up" (*Ibid.*). Note that even though this man's belief about his awareness of external objects is false, it is probably nonetheless *justified*, since he has no evidence against it. (Just like a brain in a vat would be unjustified in believing it is a brain in a vat, since any reasonable inference to the best explanation would suggest he is not.) But the point for now is that to the extent that the

case for internalist representationalism relies mainly on phenomenological adequacy, the threat of commitment to error theory undermines that whole case.

⁴⁰ In Tye (2000, ch. 7).

⁴¹ Shoemaker (2000), quoted in Tye (2000, 103).

⁴² For instance, in a case of ‘shifted spectrum’ – as Block has recently called it (Block 2000) – the sky may elicit a greenish-bluely qualitative state.

⁴³ The same analysis can be applied to the case of Inverted Earth. The experiences of First and Tsecond both represent the sky as phenomenally blue, but whereas First’s *thereby* represents the sky as objectively blue, which it truly is, Tsecond’s *thereby* represents it as objectively yellow, which it truly is. We said that *objective* blueness involves a disposition to elicit, in normal conditions, (i) bluely qualia in subjects like First, (ii) yellowly qualia in subjects like Second and Tsecond, etc., and that *phenomenal* blueness is just the property of eliciting bluely qualia. Objective *yellowness*, now, involves a disposition to elicit, in normal conditions, (i) yellowly qualia in subjects like First, (ii) bluely qualia in subjects like Second and Tsecond, etc. So just like First can be said to experience objective blueness by experiencing phenomenal blueness, due to clause (i) in the above specification of objective blueness, Tsecond can be said to experience yellowness *by* experiencing phenomenal blueness due to clause (ii) in the above specification of objective yellowness.

⁴⁴ That this is what Shoemaker has in mind is suggested by the following remarks: “... the experience represents the color *by* representing the phenomenal property. To put it otherwise, we see the color of a thing *by* seeing a phenomenal property it presents” (Shoemaker 1994a, 35; italics original).

⁴⁵ It appears intuitively that the features we directly experience are mind-independent features of external objects. Indeed, the features we experience are so represented *in* our experience itself.

⁴⁶ In this context, it is interesting to note, though, that some sense-datum theorists were themselves dissatisfied with the very distinction between the direct and the indirect. They therefore attempted to theorize the external objects as constructs out of sense data. These were the phenomenalists (for a classic account, see Ayer 1956, ch. 3), who joined the indirect realists in positing sense data but the direct realist in denying the duality of experienced features. The parallel move within the present framework would be to try to reduce the ‘objective colors’ to certain compounds of phenomenal colors (as secondary-quality theorists presumably would). Instead of taking the objective colors to *involve* a disposition to elicit qualia, we could take them to *be* such dispositions to elicit qualia – or even the eliciting of qualia itself. A very recent attempt to delineate just such a reduction can be found in Harman (1996). A commentary by Shoemaker (1996) displays the close relation of this idea to Shoemaker’s conception of color experience.

⁴⁷ Jackson (1977).

⁴⁸ What offends phenomenology in traditional representative theories of perception is mainly their insistence that what is directly perceived, and mediates the perception of objective colors, is somehow internal to the mind of the subject. But this is no part of the approach here being defended. Is the very distinction between directly and indirectly experienced features offensive to phenomenology? Perhaps, although I doubt that phenomenology itself, stripped of its interpretation, has anything to say about these matters. In any event, if there is an offense to phenomenology here, it is a minor one. It is certainly not the sort of offense we encounter in sense datum theory.

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