

What are debates about qualia really about?

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What's really at issue in the debate between the transparency theorist and the qualia realist? To answer this question it will be useful to start off with Tye's clear and, I think, representative ways of defining these views.

What is qualia realism? Tye glosses the view as the claim that "Experiences have intrinsic features that are non-intentional and of which we can be directly aware via introspection."¹ That is:

Qualia Realism: There are features which:

- (a) are features of experiences;
- (b) are intrinsic properties of experiences;
- (c) are non-intentional;
- (d) are such that we can be directly aware of them via introspection.

He also suggests that at least many qualia realists will hold that "the phenomenal character of an experience is one and the same as the cluster of such intrinsic features." It will be useful have a label for this stronger view; I suggest

Strong Qualia Realism: There are features which satisfy (a)–(d) and (e) are (collectively) identical with the phenomenal character of the experience.

The thesis to which Tye opposes Qualia Realism, whether strong or weak, is Transparency. He defines Transparency in different ways, depending on whether we're talking about veridical experience, illusion, or hallucination; the differences concern the positive claims about which properties we are aware of, and can attend

¹ Tye (2013, p. 4). Unless otherwise noted, all references to Tye's work in what follows are to this paper.

to, in experience. In the case of veridical experience, he says that these are “features of the external object”; in the case of illusion these are “features experienced as belonging to the external object”; and in the case of hallucination they are “locally un-instantiated features that, if they belong to anything, belong to external objects.”² Combining these gives us the following statement of Transparency:

Transparency: When we introspect,

- (1) We are not aware of features of our visual experience;
- (2) We are not aware of the visual experience itself;
- (3) We cannot attend to features of the visual experience;
- (4) The only features of which we are aware and to which we can attend are
 - (i) features of the external object (in veridical experience),
 - (ii) features experienced as belonging to the external object (in illusion), and
 - (iii) locally un-instantiated features that, if they belong to anything, belong to external objects (in hallucination).

Now, one might wonder: what do the properties mentioned in clauses (i), (ii) and (iii) have in common? Tye suggests, quite plausibly I think, that in each of the three sorts of cases the properties of which we are aware and to which we can attend are properties “represented by the experience.” If this is true, then this suggests that if Transparency is true, then so is

Transparency*: When we introspect, (1) & (2) & (3) & (4*) $\forall F \forall e (F \text{ is a feature of which we are aware and to which we can attend in introspection of an experience } e \leftrightarrow F \text{ is a property represented by } e)$

Transparency* is stronger than Transparency, since it says not just that only the represented properties are available for attention and awareness, but that all of them are. Though (4*) seems quite plausible to me, nothing much will hang on the difference between (4) and (4*) in the arguments to follow, and in what follows I’ll occasionally simplify a bit by focusing on Transparency* rather than Transparency.

Let’s now return to the question mentioned at the outset: what’s really at issue between the transparency theorist and the qualia realist?

1 An argument against Transparency

One might think that the answer to this question is too obvious for the question to be worth asking. After all, Tye defines these theses clearly, and they are equally clearly inconsistent. Indeed, even substantially weaker theses would be inconsistent—after all, thesis (1) in the statement of Transparency alone is inconsistent with the claim that there are properties which satisfy just clauses (a) and (d) in the definition of qualia.

² Tye, pp. 3–4.

This can make it seem as though the key issue between the proponent of Transparency and the Qualia Realist concerns the question of whether we are directly aware of any features of our experiences: the Transparency theorist says that we are not, and the Qualia Realist says that we are. But it seems to me that this can't really be the point at issue.

One way to bring this out is by imagining someone taking the above statement of Transparency in a very flatfooted way. Such a person might wonder whether thesis (1) is true. To figure this out, a natural strategy is to begin by, first, listing the sorts of properties experiences have; second, listing properties we can be aware of in experience; and, third, asking whether there are any properties on both lists.

What properties do experiences have? Experiences seem to be some sort of event. Perhaps physical events; perhaps events which are constituted by but distinct from a cluster of physical events (as in Tye's "The Problem of Common Sensibles"). On either view, I presume that, at least, they have properties like occurring in a certain location, and having a certain duration.

Second, what properties can we be aware of in experience? Well, taking (4*) as our guide, it looks like, according to the transparency theorist, we can be aware of those properties which we perceptually represent as in our environment. The most obvious examples are properties like size and shape properties, and it looks like—as thesis (1) requires—these are not the sorts of properties which events have.

But of course these aren't the only properties we can perceptually represent; we can also, it seems, perceptually represent things as being in certain locations, and can represent processes in our environment as having a certain duration. Given (4*), it seems that in introspection we can attend to, and be aware of, these locational and durational properties.

But now the problem for thesis (1) is obvious. Locational and durational properties are both properties of experience, and properties which (by (4*)) we can attend to and be aware of in introspection. But that is just what thesis (1) denies.

Now, one might wonder: even if experiences both represent locations and durations and have locations and durations, could it ever be the case that an experience represents the *same* location and/or duration as that very experience instantiates? I don't see why not. There seems to be nothing to stop me representing an event as having the same duration as my experience has. Examples involving location might be a bit harder to come by; but these should be possible too if certain kinds of illusions about location are possible, or if we can veridically represent the locations of things, in particular parts of our brains, using mirrors and the like.

The sort of case I have been describing is one which satisfies the following condition:

Representational Coincidence

An experience *e* represents a property *F* as instantiated in the environment of the subject & *F*(*e*)

Given (4*), the possibility of Representational Coincidence entails the falsity of (1), and hence the falsity of our transparency theses.

Location and duration give us plausible examples of Representational Coincidence. But these might not be the only examples of this sort. On some views we can

perceptually represent representational properties of, for example, linguistic expressions.³ But, according to most Transparency theorists, experiences also have representational properties. Hence this might also be a case in which one is directly aware of properties which are properties of the relevant experience.

You might be thinking: this is kind of a stupid argument. And in a way I agree. There's nothing especially interesting about cases of Representational Coincidence. But that's of course the point: this is obviously not the sort of argument which is *supposed* to refute Transparency. Consider, after all, the sort of claims about introspection, like the ones from Moore and Harman which Tye discusses, which are used to argue in favor of Transparency. However we gloss these reports of introspection, what they are saying should not be refuted by the conjunction of the claims that we are sometimes perceptually aware of the locations and durations of things, and that experiences are events which have a location and a duration.

So the question is: how should we change our formulation of Transparency?

One obvious option would be to simply delete (1), and also for the same reason (3), from our statement of the view. But that makes trouble for our imagined debate between the Transparency theorist and the Qualia Realist, since, if we delete (1), we no longer have an obvious inconsistency between the two views.

Better, then, to try to revise (1) to make it consistent with the possibility of Representational Coincidence. And one might think that the writings of transparency theorists suggest an obvious revision here. Harman, in particular, expresses his point by saying of the properties available for introspective awareness that "None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience."⁴ This suggests that we should change (1) to:

(1*) We are not aware of features of our visual experience *which we represent as features of our visual experience*

This has the (related) virtues of being quite plausible, and of being consistent with the possibility of Representational Coincidence. But it is not obvious that it is of any interest in the present context, as (1*) is no point of disagreement with the Qualia Realist: after all, the Qualia Realist does not (or at least need not) say that we represent qualia as properties of our experience. They just say that qualia *are* properties of our experience, and that we're immediately aware of them. One might, after all, be a qualia realist while denying that experiences have any representational properties at all—a view which trivially entails (1*).

I suspect that in many cases in the literature where people assert (1), the thesis that they really think is true is (1*). But this, as the fact that (1*) but not (1) is consistent with Qualia Realism shows, is not always a harmless conflation.

One place where this makes contact with Tye's discussion is with his "argument from transparency based on awareness" against qualia realism.⁵ If Representational

³ See, for example, Bayne (2009) and Siegel (2006). For skepticism, see O'Callaghan (2011).

⁴ Harman (1990, p. 667). Emphasis mine.

⁵ See Tye, p. 7.

Coincidence is possible, it follows that premise (10) of that argument is false; and if we replaced (10) with (1*), the argument would be invalid.

A different strategy, motivated by the observation that at least many experiences are not examples of Representational Coincidence, would be to weaken (1) in a different way, to

(1**) We are *sometimes* not aware of features of our visual experience;

But this is both consistent with Qualia Realism as stated, and does not capture the spirit of the transparency theorist's claim: the claim is not supposed to be that we occasionally have qualia-free experiences, but that we always (and, presumably, necessarily) do.

There may well be some other way of revising (1) which makes it both consistent with Representational Coincidence and inconsistent with Qualia Realism. But I don't quite see what it is.

A more hard-nosed strategy on the part of the defender of Transparency would be, not to revise (1), but to defend (1) as it stands by denying that Representational Coincidence is possible. I can think of a few ways of doing this:

- The defender of (1) might say that experiences don't have a location or duration.

The only way to make this plausible would be to say that the thesis of Transparency is a thesis about event-types rather than event-tokens; but this is plainly not the intended interpretation. And Qualia Realism is obviously a view about event-tokens, and in order to preserve the inconsistency between the two, we need Transparency to be as well.

- The defender of (1) might say that although experiences do have a location and a duration, we are not directly aware of these sorts of properties in experience.

Given (4*), this entails a sparse view of the contents of experience, according to which we never perceptually represent the location or duration of anything. But this is both implausible and an odd thing for the transparency theorist, as such, to be committed to. It seems as though transparency theses ought to be independent of our adoption of a relatively sparse, or relatively liberal, view of the contents of experience.

- The defender of (1) might say that the reference to properties in Transparency and Qualia Realism should be understood to be reference to tropes rather than to, for example, repeatable universals.

This seems to guarantee that we never get true instances of Representational Coincidence—presuming that we are required to obtain instances of that schema by replacing the schematic letter 'F' with terms for property-instances rather than repeatable properties, as would be necessary to make Representational Consistency inconsistent with Transparency, given our new trope-theoretic interpretation of the latter.

An initial objection is that transparency theorists did not mean to be advancing a thesis which was true only if some contentious claims in the metaphysics of properties are true. (If they did mean to do this, they've been surprisingly quiet about it.) But perhaps this objection sounds worse than it is; it doesn't matter, for present purposes, if we think of properties as tropes or if we manufacture property-instances from universals and, perhaps, objects and times.

A second, more serious objection is that the idea that we're talking about property-instances or tropes doesn't (as Tye notes) fit entirely comfortably with the use made of properties by Transparency theorists, since on views like Tye's we are supposed to be directly aware of properties even in illusion and hallucination, despite the fact that on standard views there will be no tropes, or property-instances, around to be represented.

We could reply to this by restricting thesis (1) to veridical experiences, where we're guaranteed to have the relevant property instances.⁶ I worry, though, that this unduly weakens the transparency theorist's claims, for two reasons. First, it leaves open a brand of qualia realism which thinks of qualia as only present in non-veridical experiences. (Note that this could still be a rather far-reaching claim if paired with, for example, the view that nothing is really colored and hence that every color experience is an illusion.) Second, imagine a someone trapped in a Cartesian skeptical scenario, whose every experience is an illusion. Shouldn't the thesis that experience is transparent be, if it's non-vacuously true of us, also non-vacuously true of him?

Finally, the appeal to tropes may not be sufficient to block examples of Representational Coincidence, whether or not we restrict ourselves to the veridical case. For there seems no in-principle reason why certain sorts of subjects, whose nervous systems were constructed quite differently than ours (and much more open to view), couldn't have veridical experiences of the events which are their own experiences. And in that case, they'll be (on the trope view) representing the very same tropes which their experience instantiates.⁷

So the transparency theorist should concede, it seems to me, that there are some properties of our experiences of which we are directly aware, and delete (1) (and, for the same reason, (3)) from the statement of Transparency.

2 An argument for Qualia Realism

As noted above, changing the statement of our transparency theses in this way removes the obvious inconsistency between the views. But in fact matters are worse

⁶ Thanks to Michael Martin for the suggestion.

⁷ A side note: one might also wonder whether we could construct a parallel argument against (2). It seems somewhat plausible that we could, if it is in general possible to perceptually represent token events as taking place; presumably it is metaphysically possible for a creature to perceptually represent events in its own nervous system. I won't pause to consider this further, because (2) seems irrelevant to the dispute between the transparency theorist and the qualia realist.

than this, because the same sorts of examples which I just used to argue against thesis (1) can also be used to show that Qualia Realism is true.

The argument just given, in effect, shows that there are properties which satisfy conditions (a) and (d) in the definition of Qualia Realism. Of course (a) and (d) are not the only claims that the Qualia Realist makes about qualia; she also says that they are (b) intrinsic to the experiences which they are properties of, and (c) non-intentional. Do the properties of experience which we've been discussing—the ones which generate the possibility of cases of Representational Coincidence—satisfy these conditions?

Do they satisfy (b)? It's a bit hard to say, since this depends both on one's view of the metaphysics of events, and on one's way of drawing the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction. But it seems as though having a certain duration is a pretty good candidate for an intrinsic property of an event token; it seems to be a property of an event which is, as Lewis puts it, "entirely about" that event⁸; and, to the extent that we can get a grip on the relevant notion of duplication, it seems to be a property that any event token will have in common with its duplicates.

Matters are less clear with the locations of events; perhaps this is an issue which depends on one's view of events. On Lewis's view, on which events are classes of spacetime regions, locations may well be an intrinsic property of events; on Kim's theory, on which they are structured entities which include an object, property, and time interval, perhaps not.

But the salient point here is that this really seems like it just should not matter. Do we really want to think of the debate between the transparency theorist and the qualia realist in such a way that the key question is whether our theory of events entails that they have their locations intrinsically? If this were what people had in mind, one would think that the literature on qualia would be much more engaged with recent work in the metaphysics of events, and theories of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, than it is.

How about condition (c), which requires that the properties in question be non-intentional—i.e., non-representational? The properties we're considering—the ones which make Representational Coincidence possible—plainly satisfy this condition. No one should think that having a certain duration or location is a representational property.

It is surprising to be able to argue for Qualia Realism so easily. It is yet more surprising to be able to do so using only premises which Tye (I think correctly) will accept. Indeed, it used only thesis (4*) from our statement of Transparency* along with the pair of plausible claims that experiences both have durations and locations and represent durations and locations. So our argument seems to show that Tye is—perhaps pending his views of the metaphysics of events—committed to Qualia Realism.

At this point, something has clearly gone awry—a definition of qualia realism which threatens to count Michael Tye as among the view's supporters is a bit like a

⁸ Lewis (1983, p. 111).

definition of modal realism which counts Quine as among its supporters—we know that something is wrong with the definition!

3 The core of Strong Qualia Realism

It's natural to think that we can fix this problem by moving to Strong Qualia Realism, which adds a crucial fifth condition on qualia: the requirement that the qualia instantiated by an experience be, collectively, identical to its phenomenal character. And surely the properties which the proponent of (4*) should grant satisfy (a)–(d)—the ones which make cases of Representational Coincidence possible — don't meet this further condition: no one thinks that the phenomenal character of an experience is *just* a matter of the experience having a certain location and duration, for example.

This is progress. But we should be clear about what we've done. We haven't yet shown that Transparency (minus theses (1) & (3)) is inconsistent with Strong Qualia Realism; we've only pointed out that our argument that the Transparency theorist should accept the existence of properties which satisfy conditions (a)–(d) does not extend to an argument that the Transparency theorist should be a Strong Qualia Realist, since the most obvious properties which satisfy conditions (a)–(d) do not satisfy condition (e).

The question I want to ask now is: what are the core claims that the Strong Qualia Realist makes that the transparency theorist should find objectionable? We know from the foregoing argument that this core must include (e), since there's nothing objectionable, from the point of view of any transparency thesis consistent with the possibility of Representational Coincidence, about the idea that there are properties which satisfy (a)–(d).

Given this, the weakest false claim made by the Strong Qualia Realist (if such there be) must be one of the four simple conjunctions of (e) with the other theses which define Strong Qualia Realism. A thorough, if somewhat obvious, way to proceed is hence to consider these:

- [A+E] There are features of experience which are (collectively) identical with phenomenal character.
- [B+E] There are intrinsic features of experience which are (collectively) identical with phenomenal character.
- [C+E] There are non-intentional features which are (collectively) identical with phenomenal character.
- [D+E] There are features of which we are directly aware which are (collectively) identical with the phenomenal character of the experience.

I'd like to briefly mention the second of these theses only to explain why I am going to set it to the side.

[B+E] is an interesting claim, but I think that it's pretty clearly not what the debate between the transparency theorist and the qualia theorist is supposed to be

about. There are, as we're about to see, interesting questions about whether phenomenal characters are (as thesis [A+E] says) properties of experiences. But if they are, the further question of whether phenomenal character is an *intrinsic* property of experience is, more or less, the question of whether facts about phenomenal character supervene on the intrinsic properties of the subjects of the relevant experiences—and, while that is an important debate, it's pretty clearly orthogonal to the dispute between Transparency and Qualia Realism.⁹ One doesn't have to be an externalist about phenomenal character to deny qualia realism, and it seems like either qualia realism or its denial should be consistent with skepticism about whether the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction can even be drawn in a plausible and meaningful way.

This leaves us three distinctive theses of the Strong Qualia Realist, each of which is about the relationship of phenomenal character to something: in the first case, our experiences; in the second case, representational properties; and in the third case, our direct awareness in introspection. These can be stated more simply, respectively, as:

Phenomenal Experience

Phenomenal characters are properties of experiences.

Distinctness

$\exists x$ For some phenomenal character C , $C(x)$ & for every representational property R of x , $C \neq R$ ¹⁰

Direct Phenomenal Awareness

In introspection, we can be directly aware of phenomenal character.

I think that this is an interesting trio of claims to think about together because, as we'll see, they provide an interesting way of taxonomizing different sorts of views about phenomenal character and representation. They also provide a nice way of illustrating the important differences between Tye's current view and a more standard sort of representationalist approach to perception.

One well-known sort of representationalist theory of experience (defended, of course, by Tye in previous work) holds that phenomenal characters are identical to certain representational properties. This is not, of course, the only sort of view called 'representationalism'—sometimes the label is used for a supervenience thesis rather than an identity claim—but it is a fairly widely held view these days. (Perhaps even widely held enough that it deserves the dreaded labels 'standard' and 'received'.)

⁹ To be fair, this is a bit quick—because it might be that phenomenal character does supervene on the intrinsic properties of subjects, but not on the intrinsic properties of certain events—experiences—involving those subjects. Whether this is a real possibility depends on exactly *which* events we take experiences to be—on, for example, how much of the subject's nervous system we take them to involve. I worry that this sort of question about the individuation of experiences often ends up being a bit of a verbal question, so I bypass this issue here.

¹⁰ Distinctness is stronger than [C+E], since it entails that some things have phenomenal character—this won't matter, I think, for what follows.

It is pretty clear how this sort of representationalist responds to the above three theses. Phenomenal characters are identical to representational properties on this view, so Distinctness is false—indeed, the view just is the denial of Distinctness. Because the relevant representational properties are properties of experiences, Phenomenal Experience must be true. But—given (4*)—Direct Phenomenal Awareness must be false.

To see this, suppose for *reductio* that Direct Phenomenal Awareness were true. (4*) + Direct Phenomenal Awareness entails that we perceptually represent phenomenal characters as instantiated. But this plus the identity of phenomenal and representational properties entails that, in every experience, we perceptually represent ourselves as perceptually representing certain things—which seems implausible. (If we did perceptually represent this, then by another application of (4*), it would follow that in introspection we can attend to and be aware of our own representational properties; but we can't.) Hence phenomenal and representational properties must be distinct, which contradicts the representationalist thesis under consideration.

The standard representationalist, then, accepts the first characteristic thesis of the Strong Qualia Realist, but denies the second two. Tye's current view is the exact opposite: he denies the first, but accepts the second two.

4 Tye's view of phenomenal character

I want to, first, briefly recapitulate Tye's reasons for holding this view, and, next, raise some problems for that view.

4.1 Motivations

Let's turn first to the thesis of our three that I think Tye denies: Phenomenal Experience.

There is a way of reading this thesis—when one says *of experience* in a certain tone of voice and with a certain sort of emphasis—which can make it seem controversial. But there's another way of looking at the thesis on which it is something close to a trivium.

For consider: for Phenomenal Experience to be false, phenomenal characters would either have to be something other than a property, or they would have to be properties of something other than experiences. But if they aren't properties, what could phenomenal characters be? Events, substances, facts? None of these seem remotely apt. Consider the way we talk about phenomenal character, as exemplified by Tye's statement of the thesis of 'property representationalism':

Necessarily, experiences that are alike in the properties they represent are alike in their phenomenal character.¹¹

¹¹ See Tye, p. 15.

Here we're considering whether certain items are the same, or different, with respect to phenomenal character—just as we might consider whether two items are the same, or different, with respect to color or shape. This is property talk.

Just the same sort of quote indicates that our ordinary talk about phenomenal character commits us not just to the claim that phenomenal characters are properties, but also to the claim that they are (as Phenomenal Experience says) properties of experiences: we say that *experiences* can be alike in their phenomenal character. Indeed, this is central to the way that we explain what we're talking about when we're using the term 'phenomenal character.' The following passages from the first chapter of *Consciousness Revisited* are entirely representative in this respect:

Phenomenal consciousness, as introduced above, is a feature of mental states, for it is mental states that are phenomenally conscious ...

The phenomenal character of an experience is what it is like to undergo the experience. If you don't know what it is like to experience Marmite, you do not know the phenomenal character of the experience This much is immediately clear and agreed upon.

Experiences — the bearers of phenomenal character — are private to their owners. ... (pp. 8–9)

Further examples could be multiplied indefinitely—and not just, of course, from Tye's writings, but from the writings of pretty much anyone interested in phenomenal consciousness.

If Phenomenal Experience is such a triviality, why belabor the point? Because Tye's considered view is that Phenomenal Experience is false. The reason why he thinks that Phenomenal Experience is false is that he now thinks that reflection on the phenomenology of experience supports Direct Phenomenal Awareness; and, as we'll see, a very plausible argument can be made that if this thesis is true, then Phenomenal Experience must be false.

The relevant aspects of phenomenology are brought out nicely by the passage from Nida-Rümelin that Tye discusses:

In carefully attending to the color the sky appears to have in one's experience ... we attend to a specific aspect of the phenomenal character of our own color experience. ... There is no conflict between these two acts of attention, rather one might say: there are not *two* acts of attention involved. To attend to the intrinsic character of one's color experience *is* to attend in a particular way to the color the perceived object appears to have.¹²

Tye then argues, very plausibly I think, that if there is just a single act of attention which has as its object both the color of the sky and the phenomenal character of the experience of the sky, then—since we can't shift our attention back and forth between these objects, as we can between distinct dots on a screen—it must be the case that there are not distinct

¹² Nida-Rümelin (2007, p. 434). For a similar sort of phenomenological point, see *Consciousness Revisited*, p. 120.

objects of one's attention in this sort of case, but just one object of our attention. But if there is just one object of our attention, and color is an object of our attention, and phenomenal character is an object of our attention, it follows, as he puts it,

The color experienced is the phenomenal character of one's experience.¹³

echoing his claim in *Consciousness Revisited* that

The phenomenal character of the experience of red just is red. (p. 119)

Let's use 'RED' as a name for 'the phenomenal character of the experience of red.' Then we can state Tye's claim here as a simple property identity:

RED/red identity

RED=red.¹⁴

When Tye reaches this conclusion, in his discussion of Nida-Rümelin, he says that this identity is a form of 'strong property representationalism.' One might wonder why this is an apt name for the view—redness not being a representational property, this property identity doesn't seem to say anything at all about representation. This is a question to which I will return below. For now the key point is that the RED/red Identity, plus Phenomenal Experience and Leibniz's Law, entails that some experiences are red, which is false. Hence, if RED/red Identity is true, Phenomenal Experience must be false.

And this is, of course, not news to Tye; as he says in *Consciousness Revisited*,

The phenomenal character of an experience, then, is out there in the world ...

It is not a property of the experience at all.¹⁵

¹³ Tye, p. 28.

¹⁴ There's an oddity about this thesis which is worth mentioning in passing. If it really is true that

red = the phenomenal character of an experience of red

then red seems to be identical to a property involving itself. Even if this is coherent, it seems to lead to a regress of sorts. For if the above identity is true, then by substitution so must be

red = the phenomenal character of an experience of the phenomenal character of an experience of red

and

red = the phenomenal character of an experience of the phenomenal character of an experience of the phenomenal character of an experience of red

and so on. This is not obviously vicious, but it can seem a bit odd, since it makes it seem as though even the simplest experience of a red expanse attributes to that expanse infinitely many (and indefinitely complex) properties. But of course this can't be right, since each of these properties is supposed to be identical to redness, and hence must be, really, the same property. This seems to lead to a pretty coarse-grained view of properties. Perhaps this is not objectionable, but it does seem to me to be a consequence of the view.

One might reply by saying that substitution is invalid here, since the context does not permit substitution of terms referring to the same property. This does not seem very plausible to me—since it seems to follow from your having an experience of x plus the fact that $x = y$ that you are having an experience of y —but perhaps it could provide a way out.

¹⁵ Tye (2011, p. 119).

So we know that Tye accepts Direct Phenomenal Awareness, and for that reason rejects Phenomenal Experience. How about Distinctness? Above I pointed out that the falsity of Distinctness (i.e., our standard representationalist thesis) entails, in the presence of (4*), the falsity of Direct Phenomenal Awareness. It follows (given the necessity of (4*)) that Direct Phenomenal Awareness plus (4*) entails Distinctness. But now that we have the RED/red identity, an even more straightforward argument for Distinctness can be made:

My pen has no representational properties, but is red. Hence, given the RED/red identity, it has a phenomenal character but no representational properties. Therefore Distinctness is true.

Thinking about Tye's response to the three named theses above is thus one way to see exactly how far Tye's current position is from the standard representationalist position he formerly held; despite being motivated by some of the same intuitions, it amounts to a reversal of opinion on all three claims.

4.2 Objections

I think that there is a lot to be said in favor of the phenomenological intuitions on which Tye is relying here, and I find the intuition that phenomenal character is, in some sense or other, 'out there' attractive. Nonetheless, this view faces some problems to which I have not been able to see a solution. In what follows, I'll discuss four.

4.2.1 A *reductio* of the RED/red identity

The first can be presented as a kind of *reductio* argument¹⁶:

1. Red = RED. (for *reductio*)
2. $\forall x (\text{red}(x) \rightarrow \text{RED}(x))$ (1)
3. My pen is red.
4. My pen is RED. (2, 3)
5. $\forall x (\text{RED}(x) \rightarrow \text{there's something that it is like to be } x)$
- C. There's something that it is like to be my pen. (4, 5)

Any RED/red identity theorist who is not a panpsychist needs to be able to say what's wrong with this argument.¹⁷

One way in which Tye might respond to this argument is by saying that premise (1) ignores an aspect of his view, and that a more careful statement of the view

¹⁶ There's obviously some sloppiness in the formulation here, as I'm switching back and forth between using 'red' and 'RED' as abstract singular terms and as predicates—this could be fixed up in a more precise version of the argument.

¹⁷ Actually, even panpsychists can't simply accept the argument as sound. For if (5) is true, then it is also true that being RED entails having a certain *specific* 'what it's like' property. And even panpsychists who think that there is something that it's like to be a pen don't think that what it's like to be a pen is fixed by its color.

would avoid the argument. He might, in particular, emphasize the fact that redness is identical to RED *only under certain conditions*. As he puts it:

Of course red is the phenomenal character of the experience of red—red is what it is like to experience red—only if red meets certain further conditions, just as Benjamin Franklin is the inventor of bifocals in the actual world only if he meets the condition of having invented bifocals in the actual world.” (CR, p. 119)

That suggests that we should understand Tye’s view not as the simple RED/red Identity, but rather as some conditional claim

$$C \rightarrow \text{RED}=\text{red}.$$

But the difference between this conditional claim and RED/red Identity seems irrelevant for present purposes, for two reasons.

First, we can suppose that in the context of giving this argument, conditions *C*—intuitively, these are the conditions under which I have an experience of redness of my pen—are satisfied. Then the conditional claim, plus the claim that the relevant conditions are satisfied, would entail premise (1) of the above argument. But it still would not make it the case that there’s something that it’s like to be my pen.

Second, the RED/red Identity is importantly different from the “Benjamin Franklin” example that Tye gives. Whenever we have a contingent identity sentence of that sort, this is traceable to one of the terms flanking the identity sign being a non-rigid designator. But both ‘red’ and ‘RED’ are rigid designators of the relevant properties, and identity claims involving rigid designators are always necessary if true. Hence the RED/red Identity is necessary if true, and therefore by Tye’s light’s necessary, which means that it is entailed by any conditional claim with the identity as its consequent.¹⁸

Let’s think about how else Tye might reply to this argument. The argument is valid, and has only two independent premises other than premise (1), which we’ve just considered. The problem can hardly be with premise (3). Hence, it seems to me, the only way to defend the RED/red Identity is to reject (5).

This is not an obviously crazy way to go. My worry about doing this is that if we reject (5), we have just changed the subject. What we set out to do is to give an account of ‘what it’s like’; that is how Tye, and pretty much everyone else, introduces the problem of giving an account of phenomenal consciousness. If we divorce phenomenal character from ‘what it’s like’, then why should we think that an account of phenomenal character should count as a solution to the problem of phenomenal consciousness?

¹⁸ There are of course nuances here about identities involving rigid designators for entities which exist only contingently. Those worries aren’t relevant here both because the relevant properties plausibly exist necessarily, and because we aren’t worried about worlds where nothing is red.

It may also be that Tye would deny that these terms are rigid designators. While he does say in *Consciousness Revisited* that terms like this are rigid designators, he also says things which seem to contradict this view; see note 22 below.

We can express this worry as a challenge. If (5) does not express the intended connection between the notion of phenomenal character and ‘what it’s like’, we should be able to be told exactly what this connection is supposed to be. The clearest way to see the worry here is to forget about properties of experiences for a second and focus on the most basic formulation of what the problem of phenomenal consciousness is supposed to be. I take it that the basic idea is that there’s a fundamental respect in which I, and you, and other animals, are different than tables, chairs, computers, and (perhaps) conceivable zombie duplicates of us: there’s something that it’s like to be us. Theories of consciousness, I take it, are all attempts to explain (at least) this difference.

At this stage, it seems to me that we are plainly talking about properties of *subjects*: what it’s like to be *me* at a time. Our discussions of phenomenal character are supposed to be related in some way to *this* sort of property of subjects of experience.

On the view that phenomenal characters are properties of experiences, this connection is easy to understand. It is, roughly,

[Connection-1] What it’s like to be a subject x at t is for x to have an experience or experiences at t with such-and-such phenomenal characters.

This, if filled out in more detail, would give us a way to roughly translate talk about the relevant properties of subjects into talk about the phenomenal characters of experiences, and vice versa. On this view, what it’s like to be a subject at a time just is for that subject’s experiences to have certain phenomenal characters. That’s why, on this sort of view, giving an account of phenomenal character amounts to (almost) giving an account of phenomenal consciousness.¹⁹

But the proponent of RED/red Identity must reject [Connection-1], since it entails that experiences have phenomenal characters, and hence are sometimes red.

Now, one might object: if we’re really interested in these properties of subjects of experience, why don’t we just talk about properties of subjects of experience and stop talking about properties of experiences? This would get rid of the need for any principle like [Connection-1]. Wouldn’t this help?

I actually think that this would be a good idea, and I’ll return to this in the final section below. But this is of no help to the proponent of the RED/red identity, because, while subjects of experience can, unlike experiences themselves, be red, these red subjects need not have the phenomenal properties characteristic of our experiences of red things—hence the proponent of the RED/red identity can’t simply say that phenomenal characters are properties, not of experiences, but of experiencing subjects.

So: The proponent of the RED/red Identity owes us some other account of the connection between phenomenal character and facts about what it is like to be a certain subject of experience. It is very tempting to say something like the following:

¹⁹ Only ‘almost’ because we’d still need a theory of experiences.

[Connection-2] What it's like to be a subject x at t is for x to have an experience or experiences at t which *represent* things as having certain phenomenal characters.

But this makes the disagreement of with the proponent of Phenomenal Experience merely verbal, as [Connection-2] plus the RED/red Identity is terminological variant on the familiar representationalist view discussed above, endorsed by a past time-slice of Tye (as well as the present time-slice of me), which conjoins [Connection-1] with something like

RED/representation identity

RED=perceptually representing something as red.

There are two points to make here. The first is that, if we *were* using 'RED' univocally, the RED/representation Identity would obviously be a very different claim than the RED/red Identity. Indeed, they would be incompatible, since if both were true they would entail by transitivity that redness is the property of perceptually representing something as red, which would imply that my pen, just in virtue of being red, perceptually represents things as red.²⁰

But the second, and more important point, is that if we conjoin [Connection-2] with the RED/red identity, we are *not* using 'RED' and 'phenomenal character' univocally. For we would just be deciding to use 'phenomenal character' as standard representationalists used, e.g., 'sensible quality.' On this usage, the claim that 'red is the phenomenal character of the experience of red' would just express the thought that redness is a sensible quality, and that phenomenal character just is representation (of a certain sort) of such sensible qualities. But this can't be what Tye means when he says that 'red is the phenomenal character of the experience of red', since then it would not be the surprising claim he presents it as being, but simply a piece of current representationalist orthodoxy, whether for better or worse, in the philosophy of mind.

One way to see that the two views—[Connection-1] plus the RED/representation identity, on the one hand, and [Connection-2] plus the RED/red identity on the other—really are the same view is to try to state the difference between them without using the disputed phrase 'phenomenal character.' The representationalist then would say something like this:

What it's like to be a subject is for that subject to have experiences with certain special properties. These special properties of experience are representational properties — like perceptually representing that something is red.

The proponent of the RED/red identity who accepts [Connection-2] as governing her use of the term 'phenomenal character' agrees, as far as I can see, with all of this.

²⁰ The gap between these may be worth a brief discussion. Saying that x is identical to the property of standing in relation R to y is not to say that x and y are identical—even 'under certain conditions.' This would be a bit like saying that the property of believing that grass is green is identical to a proposition which meets certain further conditions—which is just not true, since there are *no* conditions under which a proposition is identical to a mental state. Indeed, given the plausible principle that nothing is identical to the property of standing in a relation to itself, the two sorts of claims are inconsistent.

They believe in the same properties—the special properties of experiences which bear a close connection to what it’s like (which both identify with the same representational properties), and properties like redness. They differ only in which properties they reserve the title ‘phenomenal character’ for.

This is not an objection to someone genuinely advancing the view that phenomenal characters are sensible qualities. This is an objection to someone advancing that view without earning the right to it, by removing the connection between our concepts of phenomenal character and what it’s like to have an experience which made phenomenal character look like an apt target for a solution to the mind/body problem in the first place.

We can sum up the present line of objection to the proponent of the RED/red identity with the following question:

Given that we need to state some connection between our concepts of what it’s like to be a conscious subject and phenomenal character, what could that connection be which does not either (i) falsify the RED/red identity by entailing that, just in virtue of being red, there’s something that it’s like to be my pen, or (ii) turn the view into a terminological variant of a standard representationalist view, which identifies phenomenal character with a representational property?

I’ve certainly given no proof that this question cannot be answered. But it seems to me like a hard question.

4.2.2 *The gap between phenomenal character and phenomenal consciousness*

One can think of the above *reductio* argument as resting on a dilemma for the RED/red identity theorist. On the one hand, if we respect the connection between ‘what it’s like’ and phenomenal character, the view leads to absurdity; and, on the other, if we deny that something like [Connection-1] holds, there’s the worry that even an otherwise satisfactory account of phenomenal character will leave the problem of phenomenal consciousness unsolved. What I want to do now is to expand a bit on this second horn of the dilemma.

One reason why we think that there’s a *problem* of phenomenal consciousness in the first place is that we can, apparently, conceive of worlds physically just like ours but in which differ with respect to what it’s like to be one or more subjects in those worlds. That is, there are conceivable worlds whose possibility would entail a certain sort of failure of the supervenience of phenomenal consciousness on the physical.

But given the RED/red identity, it seems that this problem about the relationship between the physical world and phenomenal consciousness is re-created at the level of phenomenal character.

This is because the RED/red identity seems to entail that there are conceivable worlds—namely, standard examples of zombie worlds—which are physical duplicates of this world, *and phenomenal character duplicates of this world*, but in which nothing is phenomenally conscious. It seems, after all, that there’s nothing to block there being a conceivable zombie world of that sort in which things have the same colors (and other sensible qualities) that they actually have, despite the fact

that there's nothing that it's like to be anything in that world. This raises the worry that even if the RED/red identity closes the explanatory gap between the physical world and the facts about phenomenal character, it does so only by opening up just the same explanatory gap between phenomenal character and phenomenal consciousness.²¹

Something of the same point can be made without focusing on physical duplicates of the actual world. The simplest way to make this point is that it is clear from the foregoing that, given the RED/red identity, there can be worlds in which plenty of things have phenomenal character but there is nothing that it is like to be anything. (If your views about color entail the impossibility of such a world, note that the denial of Phenomenal Experience requires us to say things about, e.g., shape which are parallel to the RED/red identity.) This raises the question: what does one have to add to that world to get some phenomenal consciousness?

It seems to me overwhelmingly tempting to answer this question by saying: we need to add some subjects having some experiences of those red things. But if we say this, then we are pushed back into the worry voiced in the preceding section, which is that the proponent of the RED/red identity is really a proponent of the RED/representation identity in sheep's clothing, simply using 'phenomenal character' as we used to use 'sensible quality.'

One might wonder whether these arguments saddle Tye with a thesis which he might legitimately reject. Couldn't Tye simply block these arguments by saying that the phrase 'the phenomenal character of experiences of red' only non-rigidly designates redness?²² Then he might avoid saying that, in a world where there are

²¹ We may also be able to raise a parallel problem without making use of merely conceivable worlds which will be, by materialist lights, impossible. To see this, consider a world *w* just like ours except that a single subject, Bob, has an illusory experience of the color of an apple in *w*. (Suppose that the apple is green, but he represents it in *w* as a shade of yellow; in the actual world, he gets it right.) It seems as though, despite this difference between the two worlds in what it's like to be Bob, the two worlds can be alike with respect to the facts about phenomenal character—couldn't, after all, the same things be green, and yellow, and red, in these worlds?

To this the proponent of the RED/red identity has a reply, if a mildly unsatisfying one. She might say that (given some suitable materialist global supervenience thesis) there must be some physical difference, presumably involving Bob's brain, between the actual world and *w*. But this will presumably involve some difference in the color, shape, or location, of *something*. But presuming, as the general denial of Phenomenal Experience requires, that if the RED/red identity is true then analogous theses will be true of shapes, locations, and other perceptible properties, then any such difference in Bob's brain *will* entail a difference in the facts about phenomenal character, blocking the failure of global supervenience.

Part of the reason why this is unsatisfying is that it is unclear that this response will be generally available. It seems quite plausible that two worlds could differ physically only in non-perceptible ways—such as, for example, in the magnetic properties of certain objects—but still in ways which lead to a difference in what it is like to be one or more subjects. If this is possible, then we'll have an argument against the supervenience of phenomenal consciousness on phenomenal character which is no argument against materialist supervenience theses—which suggests that, if anything, there is, given the RED/red identity, a *bigger* gap between phenomenal character and phenomenal consciousness than between the physical facts and phenomenal consciousness.

²² Tye's discussion of this in *Consciousness Revisited* is a bit equivocal. On the one hand, he says that 'the phenomenal character of an experience of red' is rigid, and designates redness. But on the other hand, he says that there are some worlds with respect to which 'the phenomenal character of an experience of red' does not refer to anything, even though redness exists in those worlds (See Tye 2009, pp. 121–122).

no perceiving subjects, some things still have phenomenal character, while still maintaining that some things are red in that world and that, in the actual world, redness is the phenomenal character of experiences of red.²³

To this one might be tempted to reply: be that as it may, we can introduce a simple name for the phenomenal character of experiences of red—namely, ‘RED’—which *does* rigidly designate the relevant quality. Couldn’t we then use this name to describe the relevant possible worlds in the examples above?

We could: but we could not assume, as the above descriptions of worlds do, that the quality to which ‘RED’ refers in those worlds is a phenomenal character. For that would be to assume that the property which actually is the phenomenal character of experiences of red—namely red—is *essentially* the phenomenal character of experiences of red. And that is something which, for all we’ve said, the proponent of the RED/red identity might deny. (One can’t, after all, show that some claim ‘ n is the F ’ is necessary by showing that it is true, and by pointing out that we could come up with a rigid designator ‘ m ’ which actually designates the unique satisfier of ‘the F ’, giving us the necessity of ‘ n is m ’. This only entails the necessity of ‘ n is the F ’ if the referent of ‘ m ’ is essentially is the unique thing which has the property expressed by ‘ F ’.)

In the end, though, this series of moves is just a complicated way of spinning one’s wheels. For if we say that red is the phenomenal character of red but only contingently so, then there are possible worlds in which things are red but nothing has the phenomenal character of experiences of red. But then we can raise a question parallel to that raised above: what does one have to add to redness to make it the phenomenal character of the experience of red? And the same answers as above suggest themselves: we have to add subjects who have certain representational properties. But that again threatens to turn the view into a notational variant of the RED/representation identity theory. (And remember: it can’t just *be* that theory, on pain of forcing us to give up the phenomenological intuition (itself an instance of Direct Phenomenal Awareness) which made the RED/red identity look plausible in the first place.)

4.2.3 The RED/red identity and expressive power

A very different sort of worry about the RED/red identity is that is that it seems to make it impossible to state theses which we really want to be able to state. A case in point is the thesis of ‘property representationalism’ which Tye endorses. He puts it like this:

Necessarily, experiences that are alike in the properties they represent are alike in their phenomenal character.

Footnote 22 continued

But these are inconsistent given the usual understanding of rigid designation, according to which n rigidly designates o iff n designates o at every world in which o exists, and never designates anything else.

²³ Though much of the same work could be done by examples of times at which things are red but there are no conscious subjects, so what is really needed is probably the claim that ‘the phenomenal character of experiences of red’ designates different things with respect to different worlds, and with respect to different times within a world. I set aside this complication in what follows.

But what's the logical form of this claim? Let's use 'PR(x)' as shorthand for 'the properties represented by x ' and 'PC(x)' as shorthand for 'the phenomenal character of x .' Here are two suggestions:

$$\begin{aligned} & \Box \forall x \forall y ((\text{PR}(x) = \text{PR}(y)) \rightarrow (\text{PC}(x) = \text{PC}(y))) \\ & \Box \forall x \forall y ((x \text{ is an experience} \ \& \ y \text{ is an experience}) \\ & \quad \rightarrow ((\text{PR}(x) = \text{PR}(y)) \rightarrow (\text{PC}(x) = \text{PC}(y)))) \end{aligned}$$

But the non-vacuous truth of either requires that the things which have phenomenal character also be things which represent properties—which makes trouble for the RED/red Identity, since some red things don't represent at all, and the obvious candidates for things which do represent colors—experiences—don't have any.

More informally, it seems to me that, on face value, representationalist theses require that there be some things which both have phenomenal character, and represent the world as being a certain way. But what could these be, on the present view? (The one thing we do know is that, if the RED/red Identity is true, they had better be the kinds of things that can be red.)

One might try to fix up the statement of property representationalism by replacing references to experiences having phenomenal character with references to experiences being *of* things which have a phenomenal character, for example as

Necessarily, experiences that are alike in the properties they represent are alike in the phenomenal character of the objects they are experiences of.

But this would be falsified by illusory experiences which represent red things as some color other than red. To solve this we could try

Necessarily, experiences that are alike in the properties they represent are alike in the phenomenal character they represent objects as having.

But this turns property representationalism into a triviality—something which even the most diehard anti-representationalist would accept—since it's a logical truth that if experiences are alike with respect to the representation of all properties, they're also alike with respect to the representation of some restricted class of properties.

It seems to me that one can't brush this sort of thing under the rug by saying that, while we do occasionally talk as if experiences have phenomenal character, this is *just* loose talk. (This may well be a fair thing to say about the passages from Chapter 1 of *Consciousness Revisited* quoted above.) If this were the case, then we should be able to give a strict, non-loose-talking formulation of property representationalism, and other related claims, which makes the claim non-vacuously true without entailing that experiences have phenomenal character. Perhaps this can be done, but I don't see quite how to do it. This means, it seems, to me, that we're running a seriously risk of double-talk here—of, in some moods, denying that phenomenal characters are properties of experiences, and, in other moods, saying things which require them to be properties of experiences. (Or, perhaps, of equivocating between uses of the term to refer to sensible qualities, and uses of the term to refer to phenomenal character in some way which is connected to what it's

like to be a phenomenally conscious subject in something like the way specified by [Connection-1].)

4.2.4 Subject-level qualia realism

The above objections to Tye's views have, in effect, posed questions the obvious answers to which collapse Tye's theory into a more standard representationalist theory. But there's another way of viewing Tye's theory on which it has much less distance from the Strong Qualia Realist than Tye might like. Recall the point above that Direct Phenomenal Awareness entails (given 4*) Distinctness. This means that given that Tye accepts the former, the only thing standing between him and the abyss of Strong Qualia Realism is his denial of Phenomenal Experience.

Let's now just assume that Tye is right to deny Phenomenal Experience. But suppose, as above, we turn our attention away from experiences entirely, and just focus on the properties distinctive of phenomenally conscious subjects. Let's call these subject-level phenomenal properties.

Now recall the phenomenological point that Tye used to argue in favor of Direct Phenomenal Awareness. The argument was, as he put it,

In carefully attending to the color the sky appears to have in one's experience... we attend to a specific aspect of the phenomenal character of our own color experience.²⁴

Much the same point is made in the following passage from *Consciousness Revisited*:

When I try to think of the first-person perspective of another creature undergoing the experience of red, say, I think of the creature as experiencing *this*, where *this* is the color my current ... experience of red represents. But as soon as I do this, it seems to me very hard to deny that the creature, in undergoing the experience, is aware *of* the phenomenal character of the experience of red. (p. 120)

Setting aside worries about the compatibility of this claim with the denial of Phenomenal Experience, doesn't this claim at least suggest that in attending to the color the sky appears to have, we are attending to what it's like for us to have that experience?

But, if so, it follows that we can be directly aware introspection of subject-level phenomenal properties.

But then we can argue that this thesis entails the distinctness of subject-level phenomenal properties from any representational property, in much the same way as we argued that Direct Phenomenal Awareness entails Distinctness. For if we are directly aware of these subject-level phenomenal properties, then, by (4*), our experience must represent them as instantiated. Hence if they were representational properties, our experiences would represent us as perceptually representing that the

²⁴ Tye, p. 27.

world is a certain way. But they don't; so subject-level phenomenal properties must not be representational properties.

This means that we have an argument for a view which is in a way quite like Strong Qualia Realism:

Subject-level qualia realism

There are subject-level phenomenal properties such that (a') they are properties of the subject of the experience, (c) they are non-intentional, (d) the subject of the experience is directly aware of them, and (e') they are (collectively) identical with what it's like for the subject instantiating those properties.

Now: this is not Strong Qualia Realism, and I don't mean to pretend that it is. But it is in some ways like that thesis, in that it claims that we are in introspection directly aware of phenomenal non-intentional properties of ourselves which are, in the standard case, not also properties (and are not represented as properties) of anything in our environment.

I'm inclined to think two things about where we stand. First, that any reason for thinking that we are directly aware of phenomenal character will also be a good reason for thinking that we are directly aware of subject-level phenomenal properties. (Unless, of course, we are using 'phenomenal character' illicitly as a term for 'sensible quality', in which case, see the remarks above.) Second, I find it hard to see why this thesis should be acceptable, if Strong Qualia Realism is so objectionable.

5 Alternatives to Tye's view

Let's suppose that, perhaps for the reasons given above, we want a view other than Tye's about our three theses. The reasons for rejecting Tye's view are, in general, reasons for, *contra* Tye, accepting Phenomenal Experience. Our remaining questions are just whether we should accept both of the other two theses—and be Strong Qualia Realists—or deny one or both.

Let's begin with Direct Phenomenal Awareness. Here, it seems to me, we can make some progress by returning to the argument which Tye used to motivate his view in the first place—but now viewing that argument as a *reductio* of Direct Phenomenal Awareness.

For if direct Phenomenal Awareness is true, and (4*) is true, in introspection we are aware both of phenomenal character, and of properties like redness, squareness, etc. that we represent as belonging to things in our environment. If we reject Tye's view, then these must be distinct. But then, as Tye says, it seems plausible that we should be able to shift our attention from the phenomenal character of an experience of redness to the redness itself, and back again. But we can't. Hence, *contra* our supposition, we must not be aware both of phenomenal character and of properties like redness in introspection on our experience.

So we must give up either (4*) or Direct Phenomenal Awareness. To me, the choice seems clear. It is quite hard to deny that in introspection we are aware of

properties, like redness, which our experience attributes to things in our environment. By contrast, what reason do we really have to believe that we are, in introspection, aware not just of the properties whose representation gives our experience its phenomenal properties, but also of those phenomenal properties themselves?

The foregoing has thus given us arguments that Direct Phenomenal Awareness is false, and that Phenomenal Experience is true. The only remaining question concerns Distinctness. Here too I think that (4*) can provide some help.

With (4*) in hand, what we need to argue against Distinctness is some extra premise which connects the objects of awareness and attention, on the one hand, to phenomenal character, on the other. A natural thought is that this thesis should be something like the following:

Necessarily, two experiences are alike in phenomenal character iff they are alike in the properties the subjects of the two experiences can attend to and be directly aware of.²⁵

(4*) + the above principle entails the biconditional

Necessarily, two experiences are alike in phenomenal character iff they represent the same properties as instantiated

Now, this doesn't quite get us all the way to the falsity of Distinctness. The relevant phenomenal and representational properties might be necessarily coextensive but distinct. To fill in the gap we might either use a relatively coarse-grained account of properties or a premise to the effect that necessary biconditionals should get an explanation in terms of the identities of the relevant properties.²⁶

But if we do accept the above biconditional, and accept the inference from this biconditional to the corresponding property identity, we've ended up with our old familiar representationalist view, which accepts Phenomenal Experience, but denies both of Distinctness and Direct Phenomenal Awareness. And in any case, even if we accept Distinctness, the difference between theorists who agree about the necessitated biconditional above, and agree about the truth of Phenomenal Experience and the falsity of Direct Phenomenal Awareness, is, by contrast with the dispute between either and Tye on the one hand or the Strong Qualia Realist on the other, an intra-family squabble.

What has emerged from our discussion of Strong Qualia Realism is that, once we concede that Phenomenal Experience is true, the core dispute between Strong Qualia Realists and philosophers of a more representationalist bent is about the truth of Direct Phenomenal Awareness. No Strong Qualia Realist can deny this thesis, and no one who thinks that we are directly aware, in introspection, of properties

²⁵ This is more or less the argument of Speaks (2009). For some complications with this sort of argument, see, among other places, Speaks (2010).

²⁶ Though this might be a bit tricky for the proponent of the RED/red identity who wishes to accept this biconditional but also accept Distinctness, since she'll need a relatively fine-grained view of properties to do this, but seems committed to a relatively coarse-grained theory of properties to make sense of the RED/red identity in the first place. See the discussion in note 14.

represented as belonging to external objects can accept it. For, as Tye argues, if we could be directly aware of *both* the properties of external objects and of the phenomenal character of our experience, and if the latter are distinct, then we would be able, in introspection, to shift our attention back and forth from one to the other. But we can't.

6 Why talk about experiences at all?

I'd like to conclude with a suggestion. Perhaps we should just skip talking about the properties of experiences altogether. After all, the only cases in which we seem to need to talk about the properties of experiences are when we want to talk about the phenomenal and representational properties of experiences. But these are, at root, really properties of subjects.

Consider again how we introduce the notion of the phenomenal character of an experience. We say that it is what it is like for the *subject* to have that experience. But why not just omit the experience talk, and just focus on the subject-level phenomenal properties of the subject? These are, after all, what we ultimately want an account of.

Just so, we often talk about the representational properties of experiences. But these are surely just a matter of the propositional attitudes of the subject of the experience. So, again, why talk about the representational properties of experiences rather than (as we do in the case of beliefs) talking about subjects standing in certain propositional attitude relations, like the relation of perceptually representing, to contents?

In this sense, I agree with Tye's contention that to understand the mind-body problem we should turn away from the properties of experiences. But I think that, rather than looking to the properties of the things those experiences represent, we should turn toward the properties of experiencing subjects.

I've been trying to argue, in part, that this switch would entail no loss of expressive power—there's no interesting claim in this debate which requires us to talk about the properties of experiences. This argument had two parts. The first was an argument that the attempt to construe the debate between the transparency theorist and the Qualia Realist as a debate about whether or not we are ever aware of properties of experiences doesn't, in the end, reveal an interesting disagreement. This was because the possibility of Representational Coincidence shows that the issue is easily decided in favor of the Qualia Realist.

The second part of the argument concerns Strong Qualia Realism. Now, if Tye's response to Strong Qualia Realism were correct, and the RED/red identity were true, we would have a strong reason to talk about the properties of experiences, because then the key point of disagreement would concern the truth of Phenomenal Experience.

I've tried to give some reasons for doubting that this can be the right response to Strong Qualia Realism. But if it isn't, then the main competitor to Strong Qualia Realism is the standard representationalist view mentioned above, which *agrees* with the Strong Qualia Realist about Phenomenal Experience, but *disagrees* about

Distinctness and Direct Phenomenal Awareness. But these crucial points of disagreement no longer require us to talk about experiences at all, for the just-mentioned reason that the relevant phenomenal and representational properties are fundamentally properties of subjects rather than experiences.²⁷

This change would also bring some benefits.

One obvious benefit is that it would avoid us getting bogged down in questions about whether certain properties are properties of experiences (or intrinsic properties of experiences) or not, which (it will not surprise you to learn) I think are ultimately beside the point. It would also separate out the questions of interest in this debate from questions about the individuation of experiences—which, interesting though they may be, also seem to be orthogonal to the issues here.

A second is that it would enable a more perspicuous formulation of the representationalist claims, by making obvious the fact that phenomenal properties of subjects can't be identical to contents, but only to the property of standing in a certain propositional attitude relation to a content. This would make it more plain than it sometimes is that the task of giving a reductive representationalist theory of phenomenal properties involves not just giving a theory of content, but also a theory of what it is to bear the relevant propositional attitude relation to that content.

Third, and last, it would bring talk of phenomenal properties back to its intuitive home, which is the notion of what it's like to be a particular organism at a particular time. And doing this would get rid of the temptation to identify phenomenal properties with the properties represented in experience, since no one would say that what it is like for a subject to experience red things is for the subject to be red.²⁸

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²⁷ Here's one reason to doubt that we can so easily dispense with experiences: you might think that what it's like to be a subject at a time is usefully factored into (say) that subject's *visual* phenomenal properties, her *auditory* phenomenal properties, and so on. But if we think of things this way, then it is natural to think of what it's like to be that subject at a time as explicable in terms of that subject having several distinct experiences at a single time, each of which contributes something to the total phenomenal character. In the context of this sort of view, focusing on the properties of experiences would make more sense, I think. I don't think that this sort of 'factoring' approach to what it's like is very useful, but I don't argue that point here. If the factoring approach is adopted, the present point could just be stated as the claim that if we are to talk about experiences and their properties, these should be posited as part of a proposed explanation of the relevant subject-level properties rather than as the starting point for discussion. Thanks to Joe Levine for helpful discussion of this point.

²⁸ A fourth is that it would give us a statement of the theses about experience in which we're interested which is independent of the claim that there are such things as experiences. For an argument that we should be skeptical of the existence of experiences in the relevant sense, see Byrne (2009).

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