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Abstract: Qualia have historically been thought to stand in a very different epistemological relation to the knower than does the external furniture of the world. The ‘raw feels’ of thought were often said to be ‘given’, while what we might call the content of that thought – for example, claims about the external world – was thought only more or less doubtfully true; and this was often said to be because we are ‘directly’ or ‘non-inferentially’ confronted by qualia or experiences, whereas all other properties or objects are only mediately ‘connected’ to the perceiver. The modern turn in philosophy – spearheaded by Wittgenstein, Sellars, Quine, Ryle and others – away from classical empiricism to today’s ‘post-positivistic’ philosophy, has apparently involved the rejection of this once familiar assumption. I argue a) that the rejection of a certain kind of epistemological foundationalism does not entail the rejection of phenomenal individuals *tout court*; and b) that qualia are in fact, in some epistemologically significant ways, given (*pace* Sellars et al.).

Key-words: Givenness. Qualia. Consciousness. Sellars.

Qualia have typically been thought to stand in a very different epistemological relation to the knower than does the external furniture of the world. The ‘raw feels’ of thought are often said to be ‘given’, while what we might call the content of that thought – for example, claims about the external world – is only more or less doubtfully true; and this is (or at least was) usually said to be because we are ‘directly’ or ‘non-

inferentially' confronted by qualia or experiences, whereas all other properties or objects are only mediately 'connected' to the perceiver. In the past this was thought to be a theoretical virtue of the notion of 'sense data' or 'qualia' – something that blocked absolute scepticism, and offered the (perhaps ultimately illusory) hope of building a body of certain knowledge about the world from the fundamental building block of the quale. In today's context, however, this epistemological asymmetry between qualia and, roughly, the rest of the universe is a serious barrier to acceptance of the notion: the putative 'givenness' of qualia is often thought to place them in the realm of the irremediably non-physical, subjective, or generally metaphysically weird. Indeed, since Givenness is thought to have been proved a Myth by Sellars, Wittgenstein, Quine et al., qualia – qua uniquely 'given' internal particulars – have also been called into question. There now exists an influential and widespread notion that 'the Given' is a mere myth, a discredited relic of the mistaken assumptions lying behind classical empiricism.

The attack on the notion of special, immediately accessible qualitative mental entities can be seen as an integral part of the twentieth century shift in Anglo-American analytic philosophy from the classic linguistic empiricism of Russell, Carnap and Ayer (in direct descent from the psychological empiricism of Locke, Hume and Berkeley) to what is now sometimes called 'post-positivistic' analytic philosophy. This shift began in the early 1950s and was influenced by a number of seminal works: in particular Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951), Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1954), Austin's posthumous *Sense and Sensibilia* (1962), Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949), and Sellars' "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (1956). As is well known, these works, among others, apparently decisively dismantled many of the central preconceptions of logical positivism, such as the notion of 'analytic truth', the foundational epistemic role of sense-experience, the 'logical atomism' of facts, the verifiability criterion of meaning, and so

on. Of particular interest, for present purposes, is the doubt they cast on the notion that 'sense-data' constitute a class of basic, immediately and certainly known facts to which individuals have specially privileged introspective access. This is what has become known as the 'Myth of the Given'.

It has sometimes been thought that in refuting the epistemic notion that 'something is immediately and incorrigibly presented to consciousness' it has been shown that therefore *nothing* is 'immediately presented to consciousness' – that is, one might think, that qualia do not exist. This, however, is not the case; it is not a legitimate corollary of the post-positivistic rejection of the Given that we must also reject the very notion of 'internal particulars' such as qualia and experiences. As at least Wilfrid Sellars recognised, one can consistently deny 'the Given' (in the sense needed by, say, Ayer) and yet still assert the existence of introspected, 'immediate', mental particulars¹.

Sellars – who coined the phrase "the Myth of the Given" – held that there are two components to, or intuitions behind, sense-datum theory: the reification of 'appearings', and the quest for epistemological bedrock. He was explicitly concerned to attack the *second* of these notions as the mythic Given, but held that there is at least one form in which the *first* kind of view – the existence of 'appearings' as particulars – is acceptable ... and indeed, he ultimately concluded, *necessary* for a complete science. In this paper I, too, wish to defend a form of the reification thesis but not a version of epistemological foundationalism (or at least an extremely dilute form of foundationalism): in these fundamentals, then, my position is entirely compatible with the claim that 'the Given' is mythical (though I will go on to suggest various ways in which

¹ Probably this has historically been obscured by the fact that Ryle, the later Wittgenstein, Quine et al. happen also to have been anti-realists, of various stripes, about the mental.

we might still want to talk of ‘the given’). However, the position I sketch is in opposition to what one might call the *myth* of the Myth of the Given – the assumption that the post-positivistic turn in philosophy necessarily involves the rejection of phenomenal individuals as an ontological (or epistemological) category.

Sellars’ attack on the notion that ‘sense-data’ are epistemologically foundational is premised upon his very Wittgensteinian theory of ‘psychological nominalism’. He points out that, if ‘sense-data’ are to form an epistemic foundation then our apprehension of ‘sense-data’ must be a form of *knowledge* of certain *facts*: only then can it play a role in *justifying* our other beliefs. Thus, for sense-datum theorists (according to Sellars), it must be the case that *sensing* implies *sensing as* (e.g. sensing as being red), and if something is sensed as being *x* then the *fact* that it is *x* is *non-inferentially known*. Direct acquaintance with particulars, that is, implies knowledge of a certain sort of facts. “To say of a *sense content* – a colour patch for example – that it was ‘known’ would be to say that *some fact about it* was non-inferentially known, e.g. that it was red” (1956, §4).

However Sellars, like the later Wittgenstein, identified the possession of a concept with the mastery of the use of a *word*. He held, therefore, that “*all* awareness of *sorts, resemblances, facts*, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities – indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair” (1956, §29). That is, one can *only* have knowledge that something is *P* if one *already* has the concept of *P*, which is to say, roughly, if one already has mastery of the word ‘P’. Hence, for Sellars, one cannot experience a red colour patch and *then* come to acquire knowledge of redness: one must first learn the use of the word ‘red’ *before* one can even notice that the colour patch *is* red². Sense impressions by themselves, prior to language and the development of a

² As Rorty puts it, Sellars “may have been the first philosopher to insist that we see ‘mind’ as a sort of hypostatization of language” (1997, p. 7).

conceptual scheme, cannot be knowledge, cannot even be conscious *conceptual* experience³. Newborn babies for example, according to Sellars, do not sense the fact that some patch is red ... indeed, they do not sense any *facts* at all.

The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says (1956, §36). Knowledge – and in fact semantics generally, for Sellars – is importantly *normative*; particulars themselves (such as property-tokens or experiences), of course, are not.

So the Given is a Myth, centrally, because qualia are not, in and of themselves, *facts about* qualia. However,

[m]any who attack the idea of the given seem to have thought that the central mistake embedded in this idea is exactly the idea that there are inner episodes, whether thoughts or so-called 'immediate experiences', to which each of us has privileged access. I shall argue that this is just not so, and that the Myth of the Given can be dispelled without resorting to the crude verificationisms or operationalisms characteristic of the more dogmatic forms of recent empiricism. (Sellars 1956, §10)

Sellars himself more or less endorses the following story, which he attributes to the classical empiricists:

How does it happen that people can have the experience which they describe by saying 'It is as though I were seeing a red and triangular physical object' when either there is no physical object there at all, or, if there is, it is neither red nor triangular? The explanation, roughly, posits that in every case in which a person has an experience of this kind, whether veridical or not, he has what is called a 'sensation' or 'impression' 'of a red triangle'. The core idea is that the proximate cause

³ "[T]he idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder – even 'in principle' – into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private ... is, I believe, a radical mistake – a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics" (1956, §5).

of such a sensation is *only for the most part* brought about by the presence in the neighbourhood of the perceiver of a red and triangular physical object; and that, while a baby, say, can have the ‘sensation of a red triangle’ without either *seeing* or *seeming to see that the facing side of a physical object is red and triangular*, there usually *looks* to adults, *to be* a physical object with a red and triangular facing surface, when they are caused to have a ‘sensation of a red triangle’; while *without* such a sensation, no such experience can be had. (1956, §7)

In a nutshell, for Sellars, ‘direct acquaintance’ with experiences is not *sufficient* for any form of knowledge (because the epistemic is irreducible to the non-epistemic) but may well be *necessary* for it (experiences – reified ‘appearings’ – really do exist). That is, in today’s idiom, qualia exist and are mental, phenomenal particulars.

There remains, however, one important area of difference between the position I shall defend in a moment and most of the well-known opponents of Givenness, including Sellars. The problem with Givenness is that to experience qualia is not itself to *propositionally apprehend* those qualia, and it is propositional apprehension which supplies what are usually thought of as *facts*, which in turn might be candidates for epistemic bedrock. On the other hand, on the account I wish to defend, to experience qualia *is* to *phenomenally apprehend* those qualia, and, as I shall argue, this is surely of some epistemological significance. Sellars, by contrast, held that to even ‘notice’ something requires that one have the concept of (*i.e.* mastery of the use of a word for) that thing: he was apparently quite ready to assert that animals and pre-linguistic human beings might have phenomenal experiences all the time but *not notice them* until they have acquired the words with which to describe them:⁴ I think

⁴ Sellars explains this ‘noticing’ via his “myth of Jones” (1956, part XII onwards): Jones is the pioneering psychologist deep in misty prehistory who postulated inner thoughts and sensations as a way to explain human behaviour (just as molecules were hypothesised to explain the behaviour of gases); once we had the concepts we could then finally become *aware that* we have sensations,

this is deeply wrong-headed. Pre-linguistic experiencers may be unable to *conceptualise* their experience, but there is certainly a sense in which they *notice* it – a sense in which they are aware it is going on⁵. Furthermore, it is natural and not obviously wrong to think of this phenomenal apprehension of our own qualia as some kind of *constraint* or *check* upon our propositional awareness: while it is not impossible to make factual mistakes about our own occurrent qualia, the evidence from the tribunal of simultaneous phenomenal awareness of those very same qualia would tend to make this unlikely and quickly noticed⁶.

Qualia then, in my view, are truth-*makers*, not truth-*staters*. They are in some ways ‘given’, but they are not Given.

What is this small-g ‘givenness’ supposed to amount to? Just what is special about the epistemological status of qualia? There are, I think, three basic notions involved here: the immediacy of our apprehension of qualia (or, less accurately but more traditionally, our ‘direct perception’ of qualia); the certainty of our apprehension of qualia; and the privacy of our apprehension of qualia. What I want to do in the rest of this paper is to argue that qualia are indeed in some sense interestingly immediate, certain and private – and furthermore that this is the consequence of some basic metaphysical truths about qualia – but that this does not show

and so learn to non-inferentially report them. Experiences are theoretical entities which we learn to see directly: “*What began as a language with a purely theoretical use has gained a reporting role*” (§59). However, “notice that ... the language of impressions was no more tailored to fit *antecedent* noticings of these entities than the language of molecules was tailored to fit antecedent noticings of molecules” (§62).

⁵ It was the failure to notice this form of apprehension which allowed those such as Ryle – and, today, Dennett – to deny that experiences even *exist*.

⁶ It seem that this kind of consideration could go some way towards resuscitating the foundationalist claims of old – perhaps even bringing back the Given in a different guise – but this is a big project which I shall not attempt here.

qualia to be a counter-example to physicalism, nor does it reintroduce epistemological foundationalism.

Before I present my argument, it is important to give some account of what we are arguing about – some definition of ‘qualia’. In fact, my definition of ‘qualia’ is not neutral with respect to the argument to come, but instead forms an important part of it. However, this account is not itself supposed to be a theory of qualia: it is just intended to pick out what we need a theory of. I intend it to be as thoroughly theory-neutral and uncontroversial as possible. On this view the word ‘qualia’ picks out, quite simply, phenomenal properties – such as the feeling of a pain, the hearing of a sound, or the viewing of a colour – and it refers to them whatever they in the end turn out to be. Qualia are properties considered as they appear to consciousness, from the first-person perspective, and that is all I shall mean by the term.

It’s worth emphasising at this point that, if this account of the meaning of ‘qualia’ is adopted, it is not part of the meaning of the term that qualia are particularly ‘mental’, or ‘internal’, or ‘subjective’ properties. To say that qualia are properties considered as they appear to consciousness is not at all to say that they are special properties which can only be considered as they appear to consciousness. Qualia are colours as they are presented to us in visual sensation, tastes as we experience them, sounds as we hear them, and so on; but this is not (at least not yet) to say that all these properties do not actually inhere in the objects that appear to have them. To make extra sure I leave behind this kind of philosophical baggage, I shall often refer to qualia as ‘phenomenal properties’.

I shall now argue, however, that, though it is not simply part of the meaning of the term – and thus we are not begging the question in using it – in fact qualia are (at least sometimes) not properties of external objects of perception: that they are in fact the very mental property-

tokens which make up Sellars' phenomenal 'sensations'. I shall do this using a version of the venerable argument from illusion.

Arguments from illusion are based upon the claim that perceptual experiences can vary in ways that the external perceived objects do not. In the past, the conclusion drawn from this premise was often that perceptions must exist, as mind-dependent phenomenal individuals, distinct from the external objects which must then be only indirectly perceived. However, since that version rather famously doesn't work⁷, I want to present the argument in a somewhat different form: I want to argue that qualia – phenomenal properties, as we have just defined them – can be tokened distinctly from the actual, objective properties of the external objects of perception. Phenomenal redness – the redness that 'fills our visual field' – is a distinct property from actual redness.

The traditional premise, therefore, should be construed as making the following claim: sometimes, external objects of perception present two different, incompatible qualia to two different perceivers at the same time, or to one perceiver over time. For example, a ripe strawberry may have the phenomenal property of being red all over to a normal observer, but look completely dark grey to a colour-blind perceiver just inches to the left; yet, one wants to say, the strawberry itself cannot be both completely red and completely grey.

The intermediate conclusion I wish to draw from such examples, of course, is that at least one quale in such cases – the greyness, perhaps – is not a property of the perceived object. It is important to be clear about what is meant by this. The fruit looks a different colour to the two different perceivers; that is, there are two different qualia being

⁷ See my "Qualia and the Argument from Illusion", forthcoming, for a detailed defence of this argument, and for an account of how it differs from the traditional forms.

instantiated, in exactly the sense of 'qualia' which was pinned down above.

Among those who already accept it as true, this sort of conclusion is often taken to be obviously true, and so it might seem that little of interest is likely to follow from it. However, the argument can be continued. First, we can say that the experiencing of a phenomenal property is the tokening or instantiation of that property; for example, to (consciously) see something red or taste something bitter usually involves the tokening of phenomenal redness (not necessarily actual redness) or phenomenal bitterness. Visual awareness of a red object is, in part, a token instance of phenomenal redness. Second, it is a truism that there are no unowned property tokens – every property instantiation inheres in some individual.

Our conclusion now must be that some phenomenal properties are properties of individuals other than external perceptual objects: cases of misperception involve phenomenal property tokens which cannot be properties of the objects of perception, and so must be properties of something else. There must be something which is phenomenally grey when the colour-blind perceiver looks at a ripe strawberry ... and it isn't the strawberry.

Once again, it is important to be quite clear about what is being argued for. This argument from perceiver relativity does not establish that, if something looks red but is not, there must be something *else* which is red. Rather, it establishes that there must be something else which is *phenomenally* red – something else in which inheres the quale of redness. But this is a radical enough claim; the property we are talking about may not be 'real redness', but it is that property we experience when we look at red, or putatively red, things. There is something, this stage of the argument claims, which has that very 'colour' property which is tokened when we look at red things.

For reasons of brevity, I'm going to assume for the rest of this paper that the argument made thus far is sound. I think that the only way to evade the conclusion is to claim either that a) strawberries are both phenomenally red all over and phenomenally grey all over; or that b) in cases of misperception no phenomenal property is tokened at all. Though both lines may have some initial plausibility, both quickly lead to extremely counter-intuitive results (for example, to deny that phenomenal properties are tokened in cases of misperception amounts to denying that there is anything it is like to misperceive)⁸.

I shall take it, then, that at least sometimes, phenomenal properties inhere in objects other than the external objects of perception of which they appear to be properties. What objects do they belong to? Unless we want to return to substance dualism, the answer is clear. The only other plausible physical property-holder available, once perceived objects external to the human sensory system are ruled out, are states of that system – that is to say, most plausibly, states of the brain. The conclusion of this form of the argument from perceiver relativity, then, is that qualia are (at least sometimes) properties of brain states. The key, of course, is what is meant by the word 'qualia' in the claim that qualia are properties of brains – and what we mean here, the core meaning held constant throughout this paper, is that qualia are the properties that (we might say) fill our sensory fields, as considered from the first person perspective. Our conclusion, then, is that these very properties – phenomenal colours, tastes, smells, tickles and so on – turn out to be non-identical with the properties they often purport to 'represent', are not themselves actually properties of the objects of perception, but are instead properties of the brain. The 'redness' we experience when we look at a strawberry – that property – is what is now being attributed to brain states. Not merely the capacity to discriminate redness from greenness, not just some

⁸ See "Qualia and the Argument from Illusion".

representation that redness is the case, or simply a state with the content that some intentional object is red – phenomenal redness.

Perhaps contrary to first appearances, this conclusion has little impact upon the solution to the problem of the mind-brain relation. In particular, qualia might still be irreducibly mental properties of brain states, and so property dualism or some form of double-aspect theory might still be true; on the other hand, it is important that this result in no way proves the falsity of physicalism either. In defining qualia as phenomenal, first-person properties, we did not assume that qualia are only accessible subjectively, from the first-person. It could still be that phenomenal properties are identical with, or reducible to in some as yet unforeseen way, complexes of standardly ‘physical’ properties of the brain like chemical composition or electromagnetic oscillation. Alternatively, they could be identical with some set of third-person observable properties that have yet to be discovered such as perhaps, along the lines of the theory of Penrose and Hameroff, the microtubular collapse of quantum gravitational ‘bubbles’.

Nor does it cast us back behind the veil of appearance. First, it is perfectly possible to avoid the conclusion that *greenness itself* is a mental property and not a property of external objects. That is, after all, the point of distinguishing between phenomenal greenness – which it turns out is, at least sometimes, mental – and the ‘actual quality of’ greenness, which continues to be whatever property it is – standardly, some dispositional property of perceived objects. Second, this version of the argument from perceiver relativity does not commit us to the claim that we infer our perceptual knowledge of the external world from our apprehension of our own qualia. It demonstrates only that our sensation of the external world involves qualia, and that these qualia are (at least sometimes) not properties of the objects perceived. It is certainly possible to tell a story about the content of our sensory states that makes no mention at all of their phenomenal properties, but instead relies upon,

say, their teleological or causal properties. That qualia must be brain properties as opposed to external properties surely does not automatically falsify these theories – it merely tells us more about the character of our mental representations. Thus, the assertion that qualia are brain properties does not entail that the existence or nature of the external world is merely inferred.

However, having concluded that qualia are properties of brain states, there are some more positive results we can draw about the epistemology of qualia, and in particular, their givenness. Obviously states of the brain are not actually forest green or excruciatingly loud – we simply cannot think of phenomenal properties on the model of the ‘objective’ properties they, so to speak, ‘simulate’. Instead, we must presumably think of phenomenal properties along the following lines: to token phenomenal property *F* is to be the phenomenal sensation of *F*. Thus, phenomenally green brain states are not green – they have the property of being the phenomenal sensation of green. To be phenomenally green is not to look green but to feel green. What do we mean by this? Well, we must mean *something* by it, since it I think we have shown that it must be the case, but exactly what is deeply puzzling. In fact, it seems to me that this is as good a way as any – and better than most – to formulate the famous ‘problem of consciousness’.

The main question to be pursued for the rest of this paper is: what implication does this have for ‘givenness’? Phenomenal redness is a property of a state of the brain that feels a certain way. It may perhaps not be necessary that for qualia to exist is for them to be experienced, but that is certainly the normal case. On the other hand, as we have seen, we are under no *a priori* constraint to identify perceptual, intentional, content with qualia: I might conceivably be in a state indicating that some object is red yet instantiate and experience phenomenal greyness (because I am colour blind), or no qualia at all (because the perception was subliminal). Further, beliefs about our own qualia are presumably to be distinguished

from the mere having of those qualia – at least under all the standard (propositional, sentential or dispositional) metaphysics of belief. I might, at least logically possibly, token a phenomenal property in my brain but fail to stand in any mental relation to a proposition describing that quale, or fail to token a sentence in the Language of Thought about that quale, or fail to have any disposition to assent to claims that I just did – or even am now – experiencing that quale, and so on.

Thus, we must distinguish between at least two forms of the apprehension of qualia: what might be called the *phenomenal apprehension* of qualia – which it turns out consists merely in their being instantiated – and *propositional apprehension* of qualia, which involves having beliefs about one's own qualia. The former variety of apprehension is wholly non-linguistic and in fact non-conceptual – one needs no language or concepts to instantiate a property (at least not the type we seem to be discussing here); one need only have a certain metaphysical nature. Furthermore, what is apprehended through phenomenal apprehension cannot be identified with any proposition, though it may be more or less fully described by some proposition. Qualia themselves are not “in the space of giving and asking for reasons” in the sense intended by Wilfrid Sellars; they are not pieces of knowledge upon which other knowledge claims can be constructed. Qualia are property-tokens, not beliefs; particulars, not facts – there is, as Sellars puts it, literally no such thing as a ‘veridical experience’.

I asserted earlier that so-called givenness has three elements: immediacy, certainty and privacy. I shall consider them one by one, in light of the previous discussion. There are various importantly different ways of cashing out the notion of immediacy, but I shall focus on only one: an apprehension is ‘immediate’, we shall say, if it is not the result of a process of inference. More exactly, an apprehension is immediate if it involves no intellectual process analogous to inference or abstraction, or resembling the process of moving from a sign to its meaning or

signification⁹. Are qualia ‘immediately known’? In one sense they clearly are: if one form of the apprehension of qualia is phenomenal apprehension, and if phenomenal apprehension can be equated with the simple tokening of a phenomenal property, then there is nothing inferential about this process. We do not move from our apprehension of something *else* to our awareness that we are experiencing a visual sensation of a green lawn – the sensation of the green lawn is *itself* the phenomenal apprehension of that bundle of qualia.

How about the propositional apprehension of one’s own qualia? This is a little more complicated. We are now dealing with two mental ‘objects’: the experience itself (*Q*), and a belief about that experience (*P*), and it might well be that the latter is ‘inferred from’ or ‘signifies’ the former. Various *a priori* arguments were energetically pursued and attacked in the heyday of sense-datum theory that were essentially about this point – is *P* inferred from *Q*, or is it arrived at in some other way, such as by ‘direct acquaintance’? Three distinct arguments to the effect that propositional awareness of qualia is non-inferential can be identified in the mid-century literature – all, I think, inadequate.

The first argument might be called the Regress Argument: *some P* must be directly present to consciousness in H.H. Price’s sense, or we should be in an infinite regress.

⁹ For example, H.H. Price wrote that, undoubtedly, when seeing a tomato, “there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape, standing out from a background of other colour patches, and having a certain visual depth, and ... this whole field of colour is directly present to my consciousness. ... And when I say that it is ‘directly’ present to my consciousness, I mean that my consciousness of it is not reached by inference, nor by any other intellectual process (such as abstraction or intuitive induction), nor by any passage from sign to significate. ... This peculiar and ultimate manner of being present to consciousness is called *being given*, and that which is thus present is called a *datum*. The corresponding mental attitude is called *acquaintance*, *intuitive apprehension*, or sometimes *having*. Data of this special sort are called *sense-data*” (1950, p. 3).

The *subject* or *subject-matter* about which we think must be somehow brought before the mind, if we are to think about it, and it cannot always be brought there by previous thinking, or we should have an infinite regress. This means that something must be *given*. And sensing is one of the ways (I do not say the only one) in which subject-matters for thought are given to us. (Price 1950, p. 7)

Price does not expand on this, but I take him to mean that, if we make something like inferences at all, then we must make them from some (propositional) starting point. If this starting point is itself the result of an inference, then there must be some earlier fulcrum for this earlier inference, and so on *ad infinitum* unless some kind of epistemological bedrock is reached. Similarly, if anything is signified by a sign, and if that sign itself is signified by some other sign, and so on, then unless at some point there is a sign that is known without the mediation of another sign the process will continue indefinitely.

This argument, however, is a weak one. First, it assumes that inference or signification are unidirectional and linear, forming great chains, whereas this need not be so. Price apparently assumes that if *B* is derivable from *A*, and *C* is derivable from *B*, then *A* cannot legitimately be derived from *C*; the holist, however, need not accept this. Second, even if Price could establish that, for any finite system of knowledge or of signs there must be uninferred propositions or unmediated signs, it would remain to be shown that these uninferred representations are propositions *about qualia*; he relies upon the implicit undefended premise that, if *anything* is given, beliefs about experience are. Finally, formulated in this way, the argument misses its target because it does not take into account the possibility that *all* propositions are inferred but that the starting point for such inferences is *experience* (rather than some other proposition): that is, it *assumes* that *P* is not inferred from *Q*, and so begs the question.

The second argument for the immediacy of the propositional apprehension of qualia is an argument from Epistemological Analysis. Bertrand Russell, another pioneer of sense-datum analysis, at one time

(1914) argued from a slightly different angle that propositional apprehension of qualia is uninferred. Instead of examining knowledge of ‘sense-data’ to see if it is given, he moved from a critical analysis of the epistemological status of our ‘common knowledge’ to the claim that common knowledge is, as a matter of fact, divided into the derivative and the primitive, and then argued, on the basis of this critical analysis, that certain knowledge given by the senses is of the latter sort: “[T]he immediate facts perceived by sight or touch or hearing do not need to be proved by argument, but are completely self-evident” (1914, p. 75)¹⁰. Since Russell’s usage of the term ‘primitive’ is roughly synonymous with the notion of ‘directness’ as uninferred-ness that we are interested in here¹¹, this constitutes an argument that at least some (propositional) knowledge of qualia is direct.

¹⁰ Though, he writes, “psychologists ... have made us aware that what is actually given in sense is a lot less than most people would naturally suppose, and much of what at first sight seems to be given is really inferred” (1914, p. 75).

¹¹ Russell distinguishes between the “logically primitive” and the “psychologically primitive”. It is the latter with which we are concerned here. To be “logically primitive”, for Russell, is to be such that “it is not the result of any logical deduction. There may or may not be a possible deduction leading to the same result, but whether there is or not [the belief is logically primitive if] we ... do not employ it. ... [W]e call a belief ‘logically primitive’ when it is not actually arrived at by a logical inference” (1914, p. 76). Like Price, Russell defines “psychologically primitive” negatively, in terms of its opposite: “Psychologically, a belief may be called derivative whenever it is caused by one or more other beliefs, or by some fact of sense which is not simply what the belief asserts. Derivative beliefs in this sense constantly arise without any process of logical inference, merely by association of ideas or some equally extra-logical process” (1914, p. 76).

For example, perceiving that someone is angry is logically primitive, since it is not as a matter of fact the result of a logical chain of reasoning, but this perception is not psychologically primitive since it is an inference from, as we might say, the expression on their face (which in turn is represented in some way

The major drawback of this analysis of Russell's is that it is primarily *a posteriori* and empirical, as Russell recognises¹², and is as such defeasible by new evidence (or new examination of the old). Worse, the experimental empirical evidence Russell himself gives to back up his claims is distinctly underwhelming – in fact, non-existent. What he mostly appears to be relying upon is psychological evidence to the effect that 'psychological primitives' cannot be *doubted* – they require no further justification than their merely being believed. He calls such apprehensions – “those which resist the solvent influence of critical reflection” (1914, p. 77) – “hard data”, and says that making up the bulk of “the hardest of hard data” are “the particular facts of sense” (pp. 77-78)¹³.

by the colour-patches in the visual field) (1914, p. 76). Russell's examples suggest that there is an interesting asymmetry between the two properties: all logical non-primitives may sometimes be primitive – if they happen not to be the result of a logical deduction in a certain context – whereas many psychological non-primitives apparently *cannot* be primitive. For example, Russell suggests, the judgement that someone is angry is never a primitive one, but *always* a psychological inference from something else, say, a frown. However that same judgement can be either argued for logically or not, and thus be either logically derivative or primitive. Russell does not explicitly address the issue of whether beliefs can be psychologically primitive but not logically primitive, but it is hard to imagine how this could be so, for to be psychologically primitive seems to be precisely such that we come to believe it without making any inferences, whereas to be logically non-primitive seems to entail being actually deduced through some logical steps from a set of premises.

¹² For example, he notes (1914) that distinguishing between what is really “given” in sense and what is inferred is neither an easy nor an *a priori* task, but rather one involving empirical psychological analysis in place of phenomenological introspection.

¹³ At this time Russell considered also “the general truths of logic” to be hard data – these are not themselves psychologically primitive but include beliefs deductively proved from psychologically primitive premises. Other, more subsidiary, varieties of hard data for Russell included some facts of memory and introspection.

The more we reflect upon these, the more we realise exactly what they are, and exactly what a doubt concerning them really means, the more luminously certain do they become. *Verbal* doubt concerning these is possible, but verbal doubt may occur when what is nominally being doubted is not really in our thoughts, and only words are present to our minds. Real doubt ... would, I think, be pathological. (1914, p. 77)

This argument from epistemological analysis, then, either relies upon putting forward detailed and relatively complete empirical evidence for the absence of an inferential link between experiences and propositional awareness of that experience – evidence which, I believe, is not yet available – or rests upon evidence for the psychological *certainty* of propositional knowledge and somehow moves from there to a claim of directness. Let us, finally, consider this second option in a little more detail.

This third kind of argument for the givenness of propositional knowledge of experience is the most commonly encountered. It typically consists just in claims to the effect that knowledge (propositional awareness) of experiences is in some way indubitable or certain, and (therefore) uninferred¹⁴. Thus we have Russell's argument explored above and Price's already quoted move from the certainty "that something is red and round then and there" to its being "'directly' present

¹⁴ This appeal to the Cartesian method of doubt (although few seem to call it this or indeed acknowledge that this is what it is) seems to be the most basic argument in the literature for the givenness of sense-data. That is, if one doubts everything until one reaches something that cannot be doubted, one is left with, at least, sense-data. So, for example, I could withhold assent from the claim that there really is an envelope there, that it really is white, that it really has the shape it does, and so on, but it is impossible for me to doubt that it *appears* to be a rectangular, white, envelope. Or rather, since perhaps I could raise sceptical doubts about my use of the concepts involved, it is better to say that I cannot withhold assent from the claim that my 'visual field' appears in just the way it does.

to my consciousness” (1950, p. 3). Norman Malcolm even went so far as to *define* the term in this way: “*A* directly perceives *x* if and only if *A*’s assertion that he perceives *x* could not be mistaken” (1963, p. 89).

By itself, clearly, this argument is incomplete: it is not at all obvious, *prima facie*, that some proposition could not be at the same time indubitable and the result of an inference ... indeed, logical truths spring to mind immediately as a possible counter-example. What missing premise could be supplied which might provide a reason to think that certainty is good evidence for *directness*? One possibility would be to argue that the Method of Doubt is precisely the bringing into question of *inference* and reasons for belief: this would suggest that the absence of possible doubt indicates the absence of inference. Thus, one might argue, logical truths *can* be doubted as they are the result of a chain of inference and the validity of that inference can be doubted; propositional awareness of experience, by contrast, *cannot* be doubted; if such beliefs were the result of inference they could be doubted in the same way as logical truths; they are, therefore, uninferred, *i.e.* ‘directly apprehended’.

Though much more plausible than its unreconstructed version, this argument from certainty is still fairly unimpressive. In particular, it is not clear that *propositional awareness* of experience really is ‘certain’. For example, since the description of an experience is, confessedly, a different mental entity than the experience itself, it is clearly at least logically possible that the former can occur without the occurrence of the latter – hence, logically, one might sincerely but *falsely* believe (propositionally) that one is undergoing a certain experience. Secondly, it is also logically possible that one might *misdescribe* one’s experience: one might believe one is having a chartreuse experience, for example, when really it is luteous.

Further, that inferred beliefs may be doubted does not show that undoubted beliefs must not be inferred; this claim requires the rather stronger – and harder to defend – thesis that *only* inferred beliefs may be doubted. Worse, even granted that claim, that beliefs happen to be

undoubted does not entail that they cannot under any circumstances be doubted – for example, it might be that our propositional awareness of experience is actually inferred but that, for some reason, we cannot discover this fact and thus, as it happens, never doubt the results of such awareness. In other words, the psychological fact of absence of doubt, even under conditions of Cartesian rigour, still permits the possibility of indirectness.

I take all these arguments, therefore, to be inconclusive: *a priori* considerations seem to be too weak to commit us either way.

The second aspect of givenness is certainty: is our apprehension of our own qualia certain or not? Again, this issue must be approached by drawing a number of distinctions to focus the question. Among them, we can ask whether our apprehension of qualia is indubitable, evident, or incorrigible. A proposition is indubitable if has merely to be entertained to be believed; evident if it is such that, if it is true, it is believed; and incorrigible if, if it is believed, it is true. Insofar as there are analogue notions for phenomenal apprehension, we can once again make short work of the discussion; qualia are indeed, in this respect, indubitable, evident, and incorrigible. If *A* experiences *q*, *A* phenomenally apprehends *q*; if *q* is a certain way, *A* phenomenally apprehends *q* as being that way; if *A* phenomenally apprehends *q* as being a certain way, *q* is experienced in that way. As C.I. Lewis once put it, “[a]pprehension of the presented quale, being immediate, stands in no need of verification; it is impossible to be mistaken about it. Awareness of it is not judgement in any sense in which judgement may be verified; it is not knowledge in any sense in which ‘knowledge’ connotes the opposite of error” (1929, p. 125).

Once again, however, things are not so simple for the propositional apprehension of qualia. It is highly unlikely that any subset of propositional apprehension of experience is necessarily certain. Some ‘basic’ beliefs about experience are probably *de facto* indubitable and incorrigible,

and a wider class of beliefs seems likely to be contingently evident, but that's about it.

For example, if any propositional apprehension of qualia is indubitable at all, particular true propositions to the effect that certain qualia are occurrent – claims like “I am currently experiencing the visual image of a red ball” or “the music I am experiencing sounds discordant” – are good candidates. And indeed, probably, claims like these are usually indubitable for most people: when one both experiences a red sensation and considers the proposition that one is sensing red, it seems very unlikely that one could fail to come to believe the proposition. Even in these cases, though, it would not do to be too universal in this claim. Possibly, for example, someone in the grip of a theory might sincerely withhold belief from the proposition, on the grounds, perhaps, that they are not experiencing a red sensation but ‘experiencing redly’ in the adverbialist sense, or merely colourlessly discriminating objective redness.

Further, there is a good prospect that one might experience certain qualia but not always be able to form beliefs about them. It might be that certain qualia are too evanescent and fleeting to be captured by propositional awareness (even though they are, necessarily, phenomenally apprehended): stimuli on the threshold of subliminality, or on the very peripheries of sensory fields, might plausibly be experienced in this inherently non-propositional way. In such cases one could, in principle, carefully consider but withhold belief from true propositions like “I just saw the word ‘ice-cream’ on that slide” or “I just now sensed movement out of the corner of my eye”.

As far as incorrigible knowledge of our own qualia goes, the most serious problem is that, on any conceivable causal account of the connection between qualia and our beliefs about them, it cannot be the case that any propositions about qualia are in principle incorrigible. Given that such propositions “are caused, as immediately as possible, [only] by

perceptive experiences”, as Bertrand Russell once said, and given that no causal link is in principle reliable, it therefore might be that the effect could occur without the cause, and so the proposition be believed falsely – for example, one might believe that one is undergoing a red experience when in fact it is green, due to a misstep in the causal chain from the green experience to the propositional belief. In other words, though the causal link between experience and propositional awareness of that experience might be far more reliable than that between external objects and perceptual experience, it is nevertheless still a causal link and subject to the same upsets and mischances as the latter.

Further, even if one has it in mind to somehow reject any causal account of the link between experience and propositional apprehension of that experience, it remains the case that the experience and the propositional attitude towards that experience are two distinct entities: thus, no matter what one’s view of the link between the two of them, the latter could in principle exist without the former, and so be false¹⁵.

So much, then, for the necessary incorrigibility of propositional awareness of qualia. What about contingent incorrigibility? It is a much more plausible thesis that, as a matter of fact, our beliefs about our own phenomenal states are virtually always true – that it would be a very strange set of circumstances indeed in which they were not. However, that the causal chain is shorter and more secure from interference is surely not the most basic reason to think propositional apprehension of experience *de facto* incorrigible. At the root of this intuition, surely, is the sense that we would ‘know’ if our cognitive attitudes were out of sync with our experience – that it would be very odd, even almost impossible, to attentively see a green field or feel burning pain, and believe that these experiences were absent or different. This is because the tokening of

¹⁵ This is true unless one is somehow *constitutive* of the other, as David Chalmers has recently argued. I won’t address that interesting issue here.

these phenomenal properties is itself a form of apprehension of those properties – to have an experience is exactly to feel a certain way. Thus, a ‘basic statement’ about an experience which is false will typically be known to be false, since in some non-propositional way we already ‘know’ what the experience is like; for basic statements about qualia to be wrong would be for one’s own propositional awareness and phenomenal awareness to be in conflict. It would be analogous to reading a page oneself and simultaneously hearing it read out loud; any discrepancy between the two would be noticed immediately.

Further, continuing the analogy, one wants to say that any discrepancy would be settled in favour of experience – just as, presumably, looking at the words on the page would usually be considered more reliable than hearing them spoken ... you might have thought you heard the reader say ‘apple pie’ but the evidence of your own eyes shows you it must really have been ‘dappled sky’, or that the reader made a mistake. Just why we should consider phenomenal apprehension epistemologically favoured over propositional apprehension in this way is not entirely clear; but it is common – and surely accurate – to think of sensual experience as being far more ‘pressing’ or ‘present’ or ‘insistent’ than mere propositional attitudes. Compare the experience of shooting pains in a tooth with the belief that one has toothache; it is certainly far harder not to pay attention to the former than to the latter.

In addition, beliefs have a ‘duty’ to be defeasible that experience does not have. Beliefs are either true or false, accurate or misleading – they have a normative ‘responsibility’ to change to match the way the world really is; experience, on the other hand, has no semantic properties, is neither true nor false – it just is. It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that a successful mental system, such as our own, when it is functioning properly, will place the onus upon beliefs to change under the pressure of contrary apprehensions, rather than allow them to persist in the face of direct evidence of their falsity.

There is good reason to think, then, that propositional awareness of experience will typically be *de facto* incorrigible. Further, it is possible to make testable, and very plausible, predictions about how likely certain kinds of propositional awareness are to be faulty. For example, it seems plausible that extra beliefs about experience are more likely to be formed than false beliefs that directly contradict experience. That is, it is more likely someone might come to believe they see, say, the shape of a UFO behind certain lights in the sky than that a competent language user will insist those lights are red instead of green. Further, it is probably more likely that propositional mistakes will be made about less-attended-to qualia than about those most at the centre of attention; for example, it should be predictable that fewer false basic beliefs are held about severe pains or strong smells than about, say, motions in the corner of one's eye, or faint sounds.

Lastly I will consider the putative privacy of qualia – the third element of givenness. Since privacy is clearly a concept that requires analysis in this context, I shall distinguish between four different uses of the term which I think have been most influential: privacy of *possession*, privacy of *observation*, privileged authority, and 'perspectivalness'. None of these are, I shall argue, especially weird or surprising properties of qualia, *given* that qualia are phenomenal properties in the way I described above.

One important notion of privacy is that something is private if it is somehow possessed by – or restricted to – only one individual (or a select few); this is just the general sense in which a house, a toothbrush, a vital organ, or a box at a sporting event can be private. (I say 'general sense' because I do not mean particularly that only a special few have the *right* to use something private, or that the rest of us have a *duty* not to, or that some kind of *force* or threat of force is involved ... just that *for some reason or another* access to or use of – though not necessarily observation of – the private object is highly restricted. This may perhaps be a somewhat metaphorical use of the notion of 'possession', but I think it is

still straightforward enough for our purposes.) Since qualia-holders (or what I call *qualifiers*) are parts of my body (in virtue of being states of my central nervous system (CNS)), and since all of my body is, after all, *my* body (and no one else's) it is not at all surprising that qualia are private in this way. My qualia are private, in this sense, in a sense similar to that in which my liver is private: they are 'possessed' by me alone.

Furthermore, that quale-tokens – in virtue, merely, of being *property tokens* – cannot (normally) be shared by two individuals is, when one thinks about it, not in the least bit odd; in fact, it would be far more peculiar if it were not so. In this sense, as William Seager puts it, “the privacy of qualia is no different than the privacy of any other property” (1991, p. 142): no more can two people experience the same quale-token than, say, two cats instance the same instantiation of the property of blackness.

Several of those who attribute the privacy of possession to qualia, however, or discuss such attribution (Ayer 1959, Rorty 1965, Searle 1992, Unger 1990), have typically wished to make a rather more *prima facie* surprising claim – that (token) qualia are *essentially* privately possessed, in some way that things like toothbrushes and box seats are *not*. Thus H.H. Price (1950, p. 274) read 'private' as meaning “knowable only to one mind” (“knowable”, note, not just “known”), and Ayer wrote that “we are obliged to deny that any sense-datum can be experienced by more than one person” (1940, p. 136). As John Searle put it succinctly, the view is that “leg transplants are possible; ... pain transplants are not” (1992, p. 94).

Part of the feeling behind such notions may be a result of the historical blurring of the fact that qualia are *properties* rather than particulars (and experiences are collocations of property-tokens, rather than phenomenal individuals): thus I may be willing to share my toothbrush (or leg), but it would be much harder for me to share with or pass on to you my particular property instantiation of being, say, pinkish

brown! Furthermore, Searle's claim is, taken literally, probably *false* if the account of qualia I am defending is correct. It probably *is* possible in principle, in extreme non-normal cases, for more than one individual to undergo one and the same experience. Experiences, recall, are made up of qualia which in turn are properties of states of the CNS – these experiences can therefore be shared as long as (but only when) two individuals share one and the same token CNS state. Science fiction cases in which experiences might be shared, then, include conjoined twins who share sections of their nervous systems or potential non-human races in which different individuals somehow share the same, centrally located brain. Further, it is logically, and perhaps even empirically, possible to transplant pieces of the brain and in so doing to transplant experiences from individual to individual – thus two individuals might have the same temporally extended experience, but at different times (*A* will have the first half of the experience, *B* the second).

Clearly it is far more *difficult* to transfer 'ownership' of experiences (or, more exactly, qualifiers) than many other things, such as toothbrushes and limbs; but we should remember that it is still easier than the transfer of things like true memories and parentage, so qualia are not even in a class of their own in terms of degree of privacy of possession. In any event, there seems nothing especially puzzling or mysterious about this kind of qualia privacy.

The second notion of privacy, the *privacy of observation* (found in, among other places, Ayer (1959), Jackson (1977) and Dennett (1988)), goes more to the heart of things: something is private in this sense – clearly one more or less expressly created for mental experience – if it can only be 'directly observed' (by contrast with perceived, inferred, etc.) by one individual. Moore wrote that the 'accepted view' of sense-data at the time was "that no sense-datum which any one person directly apprehends ever is directly apprehended by any other person" (1953, p. 43). More recently Searle has asserted that "there is no way that I can

observe someone else's consciousness as such; rather what I observe is him and his behaviour and the relations between him, the behaviour, the structure, and the environment" (Searle 1992, p. 97).

This doctrine of privacy, I think, embeds an important truth: that, as we have already discussed, qualia are *phenomenal*, and therefore are 'detected' in a different way than anything else of which we have knowledge – through a different 'mode' than, say, perception, inference or deduction. Further, it must presumably be the case that the *experiencing* of phenomenal properties requires their tokening – that is, *only* an individual in which qualia inhere can have phenomenal access to them.

Nevertheless, we should not be too liberal with the attribution of privacy of observation to qualia. Firstly, as we have seen, it is not *necessarily* true that only one individual can possess some token quale, and since to instance a quale is to phenomenally apprehend it then, *pace* Moore and Searle, there is *some* way in which two people could both "directly apprehend" (Moore) or "observe" (Searle) the same experience – though, admittedly, they in fact never do. Secondly, one would not want to make the claim (that Searle appears to be making) that our non-experiential knowledge of qualia can only ever be via some sort of inference from indirect pieces of evidence – that it is impossible to observe qualia from the third-person standpoint. At best, this claim illicitly *presupposes* the falsity of any kind of numerical identification between objectively observable features of the CNS and qualia; and from the perspective of a research paradigm in which qualia are explicitly thought of as at least pseudo-physical properties of states of the CNS, it is flatly false.

There is, then, an asymmetry between the first-person and third-person modes of apprehension of qualia. This asymmetry renders first-person, *experiential* observation of qualia possible only for their possessor (or possessors); however, by itself it does not mean that qualia cannot be observed *at all* from the third-person perspective. This latter conclusion

can only be derived by adding the as-yet unjustified (and certainly question-begging) assumption that qualia are non-identical with objectively observable properties.

James Cornman once distinguished six separate, philosophically relevant, senses of the word “private” (1971, pp. 37ff.), but held that the only one really worth discussion was that “the person having an x is the final epistemological authority about whether the x exists (or whether it is the same as he thinks it is)”¹⁶. I shall call this *privileged authority*. Cornman notes, correctly, that to have “final epistemological authority” about something is different than having incorrigible knowledge:¹⁷ his example (p. 39) is a baseball umpire, who has authority such that if she states that a batter is out, and doesn’t change her mind within an appropriate amount of time, then the batter *is* out no matter what evidence to the contrary someone else might have. But the umpire *herself* can overturn her own decision, as long as she does it within the allotted time. Cornman thus proffers the following definition:

P has final epistemological authority about whether there are (are not) x s =_{df.} If at any time t , P believes that there is (is not) an x at t , P does not change this belief within an appropriate interval of time after t , and P understands what x ’s are at t and during the interval after t , it follows that there is (is not) an x at t . (p. 40)¹⁸

¹⁶ The other five are: at most one person has each x ; each x is necessarily owned by one person; one and only one person can experience each x ; all x ’s are experienced but none are perceivable through the senses; at most one person knows whether or not there is a certain x .

¹⁷ “It is perhaps misleading to speak of this authority as ‘incorrigibility’, for it is not true that a person may never be mistaken about whether or not he has something which is private in this sense. ... Rather, this epistemological authority is based on his being in the best position to discover his mistake or to confirm his belief”. (Baier 1962, p. 98)

¹⁸ Cornman also notes, in so many words, that the use of the notion of final epistemological authority renders a context referentially opaque: that is, *salva*

Once again, this is a notion of ‘privacy’ that points out a real phenomenon when applied to qualia: though not *perfect* (as explored above), our knowledge of our own qualia is nevertheless ordinarily far better and more reliable than the judgements of third-party observers ... since ordinarily, third-person judgements about qualia are based upon inferences from evidence only fairly *loosely* connected with sensation, such as verbal reports and other kinds of behaviour. A good actor (with a good make-up department) can give every external evidence of great pain, for example, without the corresponding qualia; conversely, extremely stoic individuals might be able to conceal any externally observable signs of intense pain¹⁹.

On the other hand, again, it is possible to press the thesis of privileged authority too far; in particular, it does not appear to be *necessarily* the case that the first person judgements of an experiencer must overrule those of other observers. Cornman’s definition is too strong for qualia; it is not the case, unlike with the umpire, that there is no prospect of overturning the judgement of the experiencer; and it is certainly not the case that the experiencer’s judgements are constitutive – that they *make it the case* that they are true, merely by being sincerely advocated.

First, as noted above, it is theoretically possible for more than one experiencer to possess the same quale, and these different experiencers might disagree in their judgements about the experience; one might think it a colour more close to blue than green, for example, and the other might not. Second, a completed ‘science of qualia’ might ultimately have

veritate substitutions of descriptions of *x* can affect the truth value of relevant sentences. See, for example, Quine 1980.

¹⁹ “It is obvious that until the brain-process theory is much improved and widely accepted there will be no *criteria* for saying ‘Smith has an experience of such-and-such a sort’ *except* Smith’s introspective reports. So we have adopted a rule of language that (normally) what Smith says goes”. (Smart 1959, pp. 173-174)

at least as much authority as first-person judgements. David Armstrong noted this in his 1968 *Materialist Theory of the Mind*:

Consider the case of a brain technician who has a perfect understanding of the correlation between states of my brain and my mental states. Suppose, then, that I report “I seem to be seeing something green”, using the sentence as a phenomenological report on my visual experience. The brain technician is able to say from his knowledge of brain patterns that (a) I am not lying; (b) my brain is in the appropriate state for some other mental state; (c) there are disturbances in the brain-processes responsible for introspective awareness which would account for my mistake. On the evidence offered by the technician it ought to be concluded that I have made a mistake. (1968, p. 109)

In short, if phenomenal properties *could* be accurately identified from the third-person using precisely calibrated scientific equipment – and there seems little reason at this stage to rule this out in principle²⁰ – and if that equipment could be shown to have at least us much accuracy as the propositional apprehensions of the normal experiencer, then conflicts between the two sorts of report need not be automatically settled in favour of the experiencer²¹. The experiencer has, literally,

²⁰ I think, though, that to ultimately establish such a third-person science of qualia beyond a reasonable doubt one would need not only to map precise correlations between perceived and experienced properties but also to construct a satisfying *theoretical explanation* for *why* the third-person aspects of qualia go along with, or constitute, the subjective aspects. That is, one would want some reason to believe that the scientifically observed properties are in fact constitutive of, rather than merely correlated with, qualia. I discuss this point below.

²¹ It is also the case that, as Rorty put it, “inability to be mistaken does not entail inability to be over-ridden” (1965, p. 56) – that is, even *if* experiencers had ‘perfect knowledge’ of their own phenomenal states, there might still be conditions under which we would refuse to admit the *sincerity* of their reports, or come to believe that they are using language incorrectly. Rorty’s example is a case where someone undergoes painful stimuli, exhibits pain behaviour, suffers physical damage, but reports – between gasps and groans – that they feel no

'privileged access' to their own phenomenal states – a 'way' of 'detecting' them that others do not have – but this does not extend to absolute authority in their propositional judgements about those states.

The fourth, and final, breed of privacy – *perspectivalness* – is a little harder to get to grips with. Mentioned in Frank Jackson 1977, 1982 and 1986, and in John Searle 1992, it is perhaps explored in most detail in Thomas Nagel's *The View From Nowhere* (1986). Nagel calls the tension between "the perspective of a particular person inside the world ... [and] an objective view of that same world ... the most fundamental issue about ... the relation of the mind to the physical world" (1986, p. 3). I take the following to be the main ideas making up the notion of 'perspectivalness', which is usually thought to apply exclusively to the phenomenal:

a) Mental experience possesses "perceptual aspects", which can only be understood through the "senses" rather than via their "mathematical and formal properties" (Nagel 1986, p. 14).

b) Mental experience is such that it "can appear only to a particular point of view" (rather than to a "general rational consciousness") (Nagel 1986, p. 15).

c) What is known perspectively (subjectively) can *only* be apprehended in that way, and is not capable of being also apprehended objectively (Nagel 1986, pp. 15-16). "Some things can only be understood from the inside" (Nagel 1986, p. 18). So no objective description of the world is a complete description of it, as Jackson argues (1982, 1986).

d) Nevertheless, "[e]ven though the concept of a mental event implies that it is something irreducibly subjective, the possibility remains

pain; in such a situation we would be most likely to judge that the reporter is lying, or does not know what "pain" means. (Rorty goes further and introduces Wittgenstein and the private language argument at this point, to suggest that the experiencer *must actually* not understand the meaning of the words she is using, since the criteria for their correct use are public and she is violating them.)

that it is also something physical, because the concept doesn't tell us everything about it" (Nagel 1986, p. 46). Indeed, Nagel tentatively considers himself a dual-aspect theorist, and Jackson explicitly holds qualia to be properties of brain states (Jackson 1986, p. 393).

Each of these four theses (can be interpreted such that it) seems fairly plausible, given the metaphysical position on qualia which is this paper's starting point. However I believe that, properly construed, the doctrine of perspectivalism is neither as wilfully mysterious nor as radically anti-physicalist as it has sometimes been thought (by, *e.g.*, Paul Churchland 1985; Dennett 1988, 1991; and Shoemaker 1991 ... or indeed, it seems to me, Nagel himself). I shall take the four claims one by one.

First, though I think it is rather confusing to refer to experience's 'perceptual aspects' – since qualia are *de facto* 'known' precisely through experience and *not* through their being perceived, and since by contrast objective, external properties like redness and squareness *are* perceived – I take it that the contrast which is being alluded to in a) is that between phenomenal sensing and propositional knowledge. Thus, all of our objective, scientific knowledge of the world is propositional or mathematical – that the universe is expanding, that it is filled with blackbody radiation at a temperature of 2.7° above absolute zero, that our planet's atmosphere is mostly made up of nitrogen (78.09%) and oxygen (20.95%), and so on. On the other hand, the *sensation* of the temperature in a room, or of the colour of the wallpaper, is in itself not known propositionally – is not a proposition or mathematical formula – but is an experience.

Second, the claim that experience is restricted to a particular point of view (b) amounts to the following. As we have seen, phenomenal properties are felt only through being possessed; and typically only single individuals possess particular qualia – your visual sensation is *de facto* your visual sensation alone, and mine is mine. Further, an individual's sensory

qualia are usually properties of states which make up the processing of information from that individual's sensory apparatus – a sensory apparatus which is located in some particular point in space-time and which has, thus, a relative perspective in no more mysterious a way than, say, the airport radar system at O'Hare has a different perspective on the world than that at JFK²².

What about the so-called Knowledge Argument (found in claim c) above): that perspectival knowledge can never be expressed non-perspectivally? The truth behind this kind of claim is simply that phenomenal apprehension is not the same thing as propositional apprehension – to know that a wall is red is, indeed, not the same as visually experiencing that redness; a colour-blind person could perfectly well do the former, but not the latter. On the other hand, it does not quite follow from this that qualia cannot be *studied* non-perspectivally – that their phenomenal natures cannot be described and understood objectively; that a complete description of the universe could not include a fully explanatory account of qualia. Qualia might be phenomenal *because* of their objectively observable properties, and nothing we know so far gives us reason to rule this prospect out.

Consider, for example, the following (by necessity rough and partial) analogy: the relation between the property of transparency and the micro-structural properties of transparent objects. A complete description of the world at the micro-structural level, we might say, also captures the property of transparency since objects are transparent *because* of (*i.e.* in virtue of, rather than as a causal effect of) their quantum electro-dynamic properties (see, *e.g.*, Feynman 1985, pp. 107ff.): that is,

²² The contrast with “general rational consciousness” is once again a reference to the distinction between phenomenal and propositional awareness: I suppose, analogously, that the radar system at JFK could ‘know that’ a certain aeroplane has taken off from O'Hare, though it would not be able to also ‘experience’ that fact, in the same way that O'Hare's system does.

not only does the micro-structure of transparent materials *fix* their transparency, it also *constitutes* and *explains* it. Possibly, then, something similar is true of qualia – not necessarily that qualia are ‘higher-level’ or structural properties, of course, but that a description of some *other* (objectively describable) set of properties will turn out in the end also to be a third-person description of qualia ... and preferably that this identification will also explain *why* qualia are phenomenal in the way they are. That is, perhaps one day we will be able to look at the objective properties of some brain state and confidently say to ourselves, “A-ha, *that* must be a subjective experience of redness! How do we know? Well, because anything that has *these* kinds of properties must be phenomenal redness. Why’s that? Well, because ...”. Of course, I have *no* idea how to fill in that ellipsis, nor do I even know with confidence that it *can* ever be filled in; all that is important at this point is that *nothing in the notion of the perspectivalness of qualia* need rule out the possibility.

Finally, what about claim d); the suggestion that the perspectivalness of qualia is compatible with their nevertheless being properties of physical objects? Naturally, we can wholeheartedly agree with this claim – but must we then be ‘dual aspect’ theorists, which implicitly suggests that qualia themselves are *non-physical* properties? It seems to me that the main question here turns on what we take to *define* ‘non-physical’ with respect to properties. This is too big an issue to broach here: for now, let me just identify what seem to me to be two opposing considerations on this question. First, if the kind of identification of qualia with ‘physical’ properties that is countenanced above *is* indeed a live possibility, then it seems at least too early in the day to start insisting that qualia are non-physical. On the other hand, even then, we are already committed to a position that might usefully (if a little misleadingly) be called ‘dual aspect’ – one in which qualia have both a phenomenal ‘face’ and an objective, third-person one.

In the end, then, is experience private? Certainly, in all the interesting senses of the term. However, in none of these senses is the privacy of qualia mysterious or difficult to accept (or at least, no more so than the very notion of phenomenal properties is to start with). In particular, in the first three senses qualia are not *necessarily* private, and in the last sense they are only necessarily *phenomenal* (which we knew already).

This completes our consideration of the epistemology of qualia. The end result, in a sentence or two, is perhaps not all that surprising. Experience does indeed form a rather different epistemological ball-park than the rest of the world, and we have confirmed, upon consideration, that phenomenal apprehension is indeed in some sense ‘immediate’, that it is ‘certain’ in the sense of being indubitable, evident and incorrigible, and that it is *de facto* highly ‘private’. Moreover, propositional knowledge of qualia can (rather simplistically) be said to be generally more ‘certain’ than propositional knowledge of the ‘external world’. On the other hand, here is what I think might be considered ‘news’:

1) The epistemological asymmetries involved, and those epistemological aspects unique to qualia, are all basically the result of the *phenomenal* nature of qualia, and do not super-add any difficulties or implausibilities to this thesis (a thesis, which, I argued above, follows ineluctably from the mere fact of perceiver relativity and which thus cannot be given up even if someone doesn’t like these rather mild epistemological conclusions).

2) The epistemology of the propositional apprehension of qualia is a rather complex business, making it very hard to make general statements in this area.

Popular notions in this domain, like ‘givenness’, ‘immediacy’, ‘direct apprehension’, ‘certainty’, ‘privacy’ and so on, require analysis but in no cases need be attributing anything supernatural or implausible to human experience. In other words, merely the claim that qualia are

immediate, certainly apprehended, and private, is (though unfortunately vague) not enough in itself to count as a *reductio* of the very notion of qualia²³. Again, analysis of the notion of privacy is required, and again it turns out that phenomenal properties are sometimes interestingly different than the rest of the world in this respect. In brief, qualia on this conception – as being a special kind of property token – are certainly difficult to transfer to, or share with, others, but not mysteriously impossible. Our apprehension of them is certainly privileged, but is not necessarily authoritative. And the phenomenality of qualia makes them perspectival, but not in a way that adds any mystery to that already existing (which, admittedly, might be considered mystery enough).

To summarize: First, as Sellars himself might admit, phenomenal particulars do – provably – exist, in the shape of phenomenal property-tokens, and to consider the refutation of the Given to be a refutation of qualia is to throw out the ontological baby with the epistemological bath water. Second, *contra* Sellars, phenomenal experience does indeed form a rather different epistemological ball-park than the rest of the world, and we have confirmed, upon consideration, that phenomenal apprehension is indeed in some sense ‘immediate’, that it is ‘certain’ in the sense of being indubitable, evident and incorrigible, and that it is *de facto* highly ‘private’. Further, propositional knowledge of qualia can (rather simplistically) be said to be generally more ‘certain’ than propositional knowledge of the ‘external world’. In all these ways, then, qualia – and our most basic beliefs about our own qualia – are epistemologically special in a way which might reasonably be called small-g ‘givenness’.

²³ A salutary example is the way Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), builds an overly strong notion of incorrigibility into the very meaning of the term “mental” and then concludes that identity-theory must be false, leaving only dualism or eliminativism as possible options. (He went on to argue for the falsity – or at least linguistic emptiness – of dualism.) Dennett’s “Quining Qualia” (1988) is another example.

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