

Varieties of Experiential Transparency

[Deneyimsel Şeffaflığın Türleri]

Erhan DEMİRCİOĞLU *

Koç University

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Abstract: Considerations on the transparency of experience in particular, and introspection in general, play a central role in the contemporary philosophy of mind. However, despite various attempts to rectify matters, it seems to me that appeals to transparency and introspection are sometimes mired in confusion: neither there is an explicit and general recognition of the fact that different transparency claims are often treated as one and the same, nor is there sufficiently robust clarity in what introspection itself can support. The central aim of this paper is to achieve some conceptual clarity by bringing to the surface for examination the rich variety of different experiential transparency claims that are left implicit in the literature. The paper falls into three main sections. Section 2 discusses Moore's views on introspection and the transparency of experience. Contra common opinion, I argue *inter alia* that Moore is concerned with showing that experience is *not* transparent (in a sense to be specified). Section 3 introduces "Harmanian transparency", as it arises in the context of the debate between representationism and phenomenism, and distinguishes it from "phenomenist transparency." Section 4 distinguishes two varieties of Harmanian transparency, i.e. "experiencing-act transparency" and "mental-paint transparency."

Keywords: transparency of experience, introspection, act-object model of experience, representationism, George Edward Moore, Gilbert Harman.

Öz: Özel olarak "deneyimin şeffaflığı", genel olarak ise "içgörü" üzerine değerlendirmeler çağdaş zihin felsefesinde merkezi bir role sahiptir. Buna karşın, bana öyle geliyor ki, deneyimin şeffaflığı ve içgörü üzerine düşünceler tam bir netliğe kavuşmuş olmaktan uzaktır: farklı şeffaflık iddiaları arasındaki ayrımlar yeterince fark edilmemiş ve içgörünün kendi başına neyi destekleyip desteklemediği açıklıkla

* **Author Info:** Assist. Prof. – Koç University, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Philosophy, Sarıyer-İstanbul, TURKEY.

E-mail: erdemircioglu@ku.edu.tr / Orcid Id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1579-7505>

aydınlığa kavuşturulmamış durumdadır. Bu makalenin temel amacı, farklı şeffaflık iddiaları arasındaki zengin çeşitliliği ortaya serip tartışmaya kavramsal netlik kazandırmaktır. Makale üç temel bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm, Moore'un içgörü ve deneyimin şeffaflığı üzerine görüşlerini tartışmaktadır. Genel kanının aksine, Moore'un deneyimin şeffaf olmadığını göstermeye çalıştığını iddia edeceğim. İkinci bölüm, Harman'ın şeffaflık tezinin fenomenist şeffaflık tezinden farklarına işaret etmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm ise, Harman'ın şeffaflık tezinin iki ayrı versiyonu olan "deneyimsel-eylem şeffaflığı" ve "zihinsel-tasvir şeffaflığı" arasında ayırım yapmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: deneyimin şeffaflığı, içgörü, deneyimin eylem-nesne modeli, temsilcilik, George Edward Moore, Gilbert Harman.

1. Introduction

Considerations on the transparency of experience in particular, and introspection in general, play a central role in the contemporary philosophy of mind. However, despite various attempts to rectify matters, it seems to me that appeals to transparency and introspection are sometimes mired in confusion: there is neither an explicit and general recognition of the fact that non-equivalent transparency claims are often treated as one and the same, nor is there sufficiently robust discussion about what introspection itself can support.

The central aim of this paper is to achieve some conceptual clarity by bringing to the surface for examination the rich variety of different experiential transparency claims that are left implicit in the literature. It is usual in discussions of experiential transparency to reserve for Moore an esteemed status such as "the father of transparency" (Tye, 2009). However, I do not think that the exact role that experiential transparency plays in Moore's account has been adequately understood. Section 2 discusses Moore's views on introspection and the transparency of experience. Contra common opinion, I argue *inter alia* that Moore is concerned with showing that experience is *not* transparent (in a sense to be specified). Section 3 introduces "Harmanian transparency", as it arises in the context of the debate between representationism and phenomenism, and distinguishes it from "phenomenist transparency." Various conclusions are drawn about the relations among the sort of transparency Moore is committed to (which I call "modest transparency"), Harmanian transparency, and phenomenist transparency. Section 4 distinguishes two varieties of Harmanian transparency, i.e. "experiencing-act transparency" and "mental-paint transparency". I claim that mental-paint transparency is the sort Harman actually argues for, and also that there are good reasons to think that mental-paint transparency is not supported by introspection.

2. Moore on Introspection and the Transparency of experience

In his famous “The Refutation of Idealism” (1903),¹ Moore identifies the thesis that *esse* is *percipi* as “a single proposition which is a necessary and essential step in all Idealistic arguments” (p. 435), and proposes to show that “in all the senses ever given to it” (p. 436) that thesis is false. The question about the truth of the thesis, Moore holds, turns on the question whether what makes a thing real is “its presence as an inseparable aspect of a sentient experience” (p. 438), where experience is construed broadly so as to include thoughts as well as sensations. Moore argues that the answer to this question is in the negative.

The distinction Moore draws between “consciousness” (or “awareness”) and its “object” plays a central role in his attack on the thesis that *esse* is *percipi*. In an oft-quoted passage, Moore writes:

We have then in every sensation two distinct terms, (1) ‘consciousness,’ in respect of which all sensations are alike; and (2) something else, in respect of which one sensation differs from another. It will be convenient if I may be allowed to call this second term the ‘object’ of a sensation: this also without yet attempting to say what I mean by the word. (p. 444)

According to Moore, the distinction between consciousness and the object of consciousness straightforwardly undermines the idealist’s identification of *esse* with *percipi*. “That *esse* is held to be *percipi*”, Moore writes, “solely because *what is experienced* is held to be identical with *the experience of it*” (p. 445). According to Moore (1903), once a philosophical error as obvious and simple as the failure to properly distinguish consciousness from its objects is exposed and, thereby, avoided, it becomes clear “how utterly unfounded” (p. 451) the idealistic identification in question is. Further, the distinction between consciousness and its objects, Moore argues, leads to a swift dissolution of the traditional philosophical problem of “the veil of perception” at one stroke:

There is, therefore, no question of how we are to ‘get outside the circle of our own ideas and sensations’. Merely to have a sensation is already to *be* outside that circle. It is to know something which is as truly and really *not* a part of *my* experience, as anything which I can ever know. (p. 451)

I think Moore’s “refutation of idealism” is, to put it mildly, unsuccessful. More specifically, I think both the thesis that *esse* is *percipi* and the problem of the veil of perception are left unscratched by the distinction Moore draws between consciousness

¹ All references to Moore that follow are to this work.

and its objects.² However, my interest in this paper is not so much in the degree of persuasiveness of Moore's attack on idealism, as in the role that introspection and the transparency of experience play regarding the distinction between consciousness and its objects. How does Moore appeal to introspection to support the distinction between consciousness and its objects? And, relatedly but distinctly, what service does the transparency of experience perform in Moore's account?

According to Moore, consciousness is an act of "experiencing" (p. 449), in virtue of which the mind "has a perfectly distinct and unique relation" (p. 449) to its objects. It is in virtue of this relational act that we can properly use the preposition "of", in the sense in which we intend when we utter phrases like "the sensation of blue". The of-ness meant in such usages is, for Moore, the sort of of-ness that we mean by saying "knowledge of a thing" (p. 450): just as the of-ness of knowledge-of, Moore holds, properly reflects the relational character of knowing, the of-ness of sensation-of should be taken as reflecting the relational character of experiencing. It is proper to say that Moore here proposes what is commonly known as "the act-object model" of experience, according to which experiences consist in an act of experiencing that is always, in a terminology that Moore himself does not use, "directed upon" or "about" some objects.³

For Moore, introspective reflection provides good reason to prefer the act-object model of experience over its main competitor, which Moore calls "the content view" (p. 447). According to the latter, what is the case when we have "the sensation of blue" is that the sensation has the *quality* of being blue, and, accordingly, the sensation of blue is like a blue bead or a blue beard. In the content view, which Moore takes to be "a universally received opinion" (p. 448), "the relation of blue to the consciousness is conceived to be exactly the same as that of the blue to the glass or hair: it is in all three cases the *quality* of a *thing*" (p. 448).⁴

² Moore himself seems to agree with this judgment as he says the following in the preface of the collection *Philosophical Studies* (1922) in which "The Refutation of Idealism" is republished: "This paper now appears to me to be very confused, as well as to embody a good many down-right mistakes" (p. viii). For a construal of Moore's argument against idealism that deserves a serious examination, see Hellie (2007). Whilst the account offered in this section of Moore's views on introspection and experiential transparency diverges from Hellie's account in some crucial respects, it still owes a good deal to it.

³ There are different notions of "the act-object model" in the literature. For instance, Jackson writes: "According to the act-object analysis, to have an experience is to stand in the relation of awareness to an object whose properties *determine* the kind of experience undergone" (2009: 55, emphasis mine). As I conceive it, the determination claim in Jackson's definition is not essential to the act-object model as such. Neither do I find any utility in defining the act-object model in the way Jackson does.

⁴ It seems plausible to hold that what Moore calls the content view is a predecessor of the adverbial theory of perception, according to which, in the words of one of its early proponents, "to sense blue is...to sense *bluely*,

As regards how the content and act-object views fare with respect to the evidence introspection provides us with, Moore writes:

Whether or not, when I have the sensation of blue, my consciousness or awareness is thus blue, my introspection does not enable me to decide with certainty: I only see no reason for thinking that it is. But whether it is or not, the point is unimportant, for introspection *does* enable me to decide that something else is also true: namely that I am aware *of* blue, and by this I mean, that my awareness has to blue a quite different and distinct relation. It is possible, I admit, that my awareness is blue *as well* as being of blue: but what I am quite sure of is that it is *of* blue. (p. 450)

According to Moore, introspection is silent on whether the sensation of blue is blue; for all introspection tells us, we are entitled to claim neither that it is blue nor that it is not blue. However, Moore argues, introspection is not neutral with respect to whether the sensation of blue is an awareness *of* blue: evidence provided by introspection entitles us to claim (with certainty) that when I have what can be naturally characterized as the sensation of blue, I stand in “a quite different and distinct relation” (what Moore calls “consciousness”) to a certain object (what Moore calls “blue”). Taking into account solely what introspection enables us to say about the structure of experience, the act-object model wins the day.⁵

Introspection, in Moore’s view, provides *positive* support for the act-object model of experience that he advocates. However, considerations pertaining to the transparency of experience have the role of *warding off* in advance a particular objection that might be raised against the act-object model. The objection is this: if experiences have an act-object structure, as Moore claims them to have, then why do we not find the component that corresponds to the *act* part (that is, *experiencing*) in our typical introspective queries? The answer Moore gives is that this is because experience is transparent. In two oft-cited passages on the issue, Moore writes:

The term blue is easy enough to distinguish, but the other element which I have called ‘consciousness’ – that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green – is extremely difficult to fix...And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us; it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent – we look through it and see nothing but the blue. (p. 446)

[T]he moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see *what*, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to

just as to dance the waltz is to dance ‘waltzily’” (Ducasse, 1951: 232-233). The adverbial theory of perception is defended among others by Chisholm (1957), Tye (1984), Coates (2007) and Kriegel (2007).

⁵ See also Farkas (2010) for an interpretation of Moore’s argument along these lines. For the purposes of this paper, I will simply assume that introspection prefers the act-object model of experience to the alternative models available in the literature such as adverbialism.

introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. (p. 550)

For Moore, the object component of experiences is “easy enough to distinguish” through introspection. Furthermore, the fact that the experiencing act “seems as if it were diaphanous” explains why our attempts to fix our attention on it typically fail. The introspective elusiveness of the experiencing act explains, according to Moore, why the distinction between the act and object components of experience is so seldom noticed, and, hence, why so many philosophers do not endorse the act-object model: they mistakenly infer the falsity of that view from the transparency of the experiencing act.

On Moore’s account, introspection provides evidence for the act-object model, and the transparency of experience, a specific introspective finding, explains why many have failed to recognize the truth of the act-object model. Therefore, introspection in general, and the transparency of experience in particular, have different dialectical roles to play. Hence, Jackson is mistaken when he writes that “[transparency] is [...] a way of affirming the famous act-object analysis” (2009: 55). The transparency of experience *presupposes* the act-object model and, at least as far as Moore is concerned, explains why many do *not* affirm that model.

Now, an interesting problem arises with Moore’s reliance on introspection as a source of support for the act-object model. For Moore, it is introspectively clear (or, as he says, “certain”) that experiences have an act-object structure. However, Moore also claims that the act component of experience is transparent to introspection: when we try to introspectively attend to the experiencing act that is, in Moore’s view, a component of a particular experience, we typically fail to notice that there is anything that corresponds to that component in that experience. If, however, the act component of experience is transparent to introspection, how can it be introspectively clear that experiences have an act-object structure? If “when try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue”, as Moore claims, how can introspection by itself provide positive support for the *act-object* model? Is it not the case that the act-object structure of our experiences can be introspectively clear only if we find both components through our introspective attention to those experiences?⁶

I simply grant that introspection would provide no positive support for the act-object model if one of the components were not introspectively discernable, which, in any case, I find plausible. If this is so, then it seems that there is only one way to solve the

⁶ Hellie puts the objection in question, without endorsing it, as follows: “Since awareness-of seems to vanish, so does B’s [blue’s] standing as the saturator of the second argument place of awareness-of, and with it, evidential support for the relational view [i.e. the act-object view]” (2007: 346).

interpretive problem of how Moore sees the relation between what introspection, in general, and experiential transparency, in particular, supports (except for attributing Moore an outright inconsistency). On this solution, Moore should not be interpreted as arguing that it is *impossible* to introspectively attend to the experiencing act, but that it is *difficult* to do so. If Moore argues for the latter, then the interpretive problem above simply dissolves: that introspecting the act component is more difficult than introspecting the object component does not tell against the idea that both components of experience can be found through our introspective attention to those experiences. What is more, this dissolution of the interpretive problem gets textual support from Moore's remarks like "Yet it [the experiencing act] *can* be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for" (p. 550).

Let me then distinguish two theses of transparency:

Modest transparency: it is difficult, but still possible, to introspectively attend to the act component of experiences.

Ultimate transparency: it is impossible to introspectively attend to the act component of experiences.

I claim that Moore holds that experiences are modestly transparent and, accordingly, that he denies that they are ultimately transparent. That is to say, according to Moore, we *can* introspectively attend to the act component of experiences. The main reason I submit for this claim is that if he held that experiences are *ultimately* transparent, then the act-object model would fail to receive the support from introspection that Moore believes it receives.

In contemporary philosophy, Moore is generally conceived as holding the view that we cannot introspectively attend to the act component of experience, but only to its object component.⁷ We can now see that this is false. If Moore were to hold *that*, then the act-object model of experience would not enjoy the support that Moore believes it receives from introspection. Moore is better interpreted as arguing for *modest* transparency and is primarily concerned with showing that the act component of experiences is *not* ultimately transparent. However, I will argue in Section 4 that the fact that Moore only argues for modest transparency does not (or need not) have the consequences it might be supposed to have for the representationism–phenomenism debate. In particular, I

⁷ See Hellie (2007), Kind (2003), and Farkas (2010) for a persuasive criticism of this disturbingly common portrayal of Moore's account. Hellie's warning deserves emphasis: "Moore's text is both very challenging and very evocative. That's a dangerous combination, because the temptation is great to enlist Moore in one's army without first checking his citizenship" (p. 354).

will maintain that despite appearances, representationists need not have anything to fear about the truth of modest transparency.

To summarize my exposition above, Moore endorses the following theses:

- (1) Experiences have an act-object structure;
- (2) Introspection provides positive support for (1);
- (3) The act component of experiences is *modestly* transparent to introspection;
- (4) The truth of (3) explains why philosophers have typically failed to appreciate the truth of (1);
- (5) The object component of experiences is neither modestly nor ultimately transparent to introspection. (There is no difficulty in directly attending to the objects of experiences, which are, as it were, evidently before the introspecting mind.)

2.1. Weak and Strong Transparency

I would now like to clarify how the distinction I have drawn between modest and ultimate transparency theses is related to Kind's (2003: 230) distinction between the strong and weak transparency theses, stated below:

Strong transparency: it is *impossible* to attend directly to our experience, i.e., we cannot attend to our experience except by attending to the objects represented by that experience.

Weak transparency: it is *difficult* (but not impossible) to attend directly to our experience, i.e., we can most easily attend to our experience by attending to the objects represented by that experience.⁸

Kind further argues that "Moore is best interpreted as endorsing only weak transparency" (2003: 232), primarily on the basis of one of his statements that I quoted

⁸ It is plausible to suggest that Kind presupposes the act-object model of perceptual experiences in the formulation of these two transparency claims, which assumes that the subjects are presented with *objects* (towards which the experiencing *act* is directed). The central issue Kind is concerned with in her paper is whether representationism receives the support it is thought to receive by representationists from experiential transparency (p. 225), and the discussion below shall provide some support for the thesis that representationism itself is a version of the act-object model of experience.

above (2003: 229), i.e. “Yet it [the experiencing act] *can* be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for.”

There are at least three ways in which Moore’s modest transparency differs from Kind’s weak transparency. Firstly, Kind’s weak transparency takes it for granted that the objects of experience are “represented”, whereas Moore’s modest transparency is neutral with respect to whether they are represented or, say, primitively presented (as in an acquaintance relation). Kind’s formulation of experiential transparency in terms of represented objects reflects a general tendency in recent philosophy of mind, one which, as we shall see below, is shaped by the debate between representationism and phenomenism.⁹ However, although perhaps excusable given that a common ground for representationists and (most) phenomenists is that the objects of experience are represented, I shall argue in subsections 3.1 and 3.2 that an adequate formulation of experiential transparency should not assume the truth of that common ground.

Secondly, Kind’s weak and strong transparency theses are formulated in terms of “direct attention” to experience, whereas Moore’s modest and ultimate transparency theses are not. Kind contrasts direct attention to our experience with attention to that experience *by* attending to its objects. Strong transparency claims that only the latter sort of attention is possible, whereas weak transparency claims that the former (i.e. attention to our experience *without* attending to its objects) is also possible. However, if this is how we should conceive direct attention to experience, then contra what Kind maintains, Moore need not hold weak transparency but instead can consistently hold strong transparency. That is, Moore can consistently claim that one can *introspectively* attend to the experiencing act *only by* attending to the objects of experience.¹⁰ It is important to note here that the main reason why Moore appeals to introspection is to provide some phenomenological support for the act-object model of experiences. According to Moore, both the act and the object components of experiences are discernible through introspection. Yet, it would not matter much for his purposes whether introspective attention to these components is *equally* direct or not. That is, by Moore’s lights, the appeal to introspection would give some good reason to hold the act-object model even if our introspective attention to the act component were *less* direct than our introspective attention to the object component. In other words, what is of central importance to Moore is whether the experiencing act is introspectively

⁹ For instance, Crane (2000) writes: “The thesis of the transparency of experience...is that all introspection can reveal are facts about the content of the experience (how things are represented to be) or represented facts about the object of experience (what is represented or presented in experience)” (p. 50).

¹⁰ Here I assume that by “experience” Kind means “the experiencing act.” However, see Section 4 for further discussion.

discernable or not, not whether it is as directly discernable as the object of experience. So, Moore can consistently hold *both* modest transparency *and* Kind's strong transparency, which means that modest transparency is not the same as her weak transparency.

Thirdly, it is typical in contemporary philosophy of mind to formulate transparency theses in terms of the notion of "experience", and Kind's formulation is no exception; however, this practice unduly neglects, and thereby obscures, the distinction between the act and object of experiences, which Moore is at pains to calling our attention to and in the context of which he brings forth transparency considerations. Note that if "experience" meant "the object of experience," then Moore would deny *weak* as well as strong transparency.

Is this omission innocent? Can we not harmlessly assume that what is in general meant by experience is simply Moore's experiencing act? As I will argue in Section 4, the answer is, perhaps surprisingly, "no." The common practice of formulating transparency theses in terms of experience, rather than the experiencing act makes almost invisible the crucial distinction between what I will call "experiencing-act transparency" and "mental-paint transparency." The equivocation between these different transparency claims accounts to some extent for the current popularity the latter enjoys, despite the fact that there appear to be some powerful considerations that work against it.

3. Representationists on Introspection and the Transparency of experience

It appears that considerations of the transparency of experience are raised almost exclusively in the context of what Block once called "the greatest chasm in the philosophy of mind" (1995: 19). The central question that divides the two perspectives on consciousness concerns how the phenomenal character ("what-it-is-likeness" or "subjective feel") of experiences should be accounted for. The view that the phenomenal character of an experience outruns or comes apart from its representational content is "phenomenism," and the view that phenomenal character does not go beyond or is exhausted by representational content is "representationism" (Block 1995: 20).¹¹ Representationists typically hold that the transparency of experience provides some good reasons for preferring their view to phenomenism.

¹¹ These two views are also called "the qualia theory" and "representationalism" (or "intentionalism") in the literature, respectively. I will not raise the question of which labelling is less misleading or otherwise more preferable and simply stick with Block's original labelling.

Harman's seminal "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience" (1990) is mostly responsible for framing much of the contemporary appeal to experiential transparency in terms of its contribution to the debate between representationism and phenomenism.¹² Harman *qua* representationist claims that experience is transparent, in the sense that introspective attention does not reveal the "intrinsic properties" of experience but only the properties of its objects. In a well-known passage, Harman writes:

When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. Nor does she experience any features of anything as intrinsic features of her experience. And that is true of you too. There is nothing special about Eloise's experience. When you see a tree, you do not experience any features as intrinsic features of your experience. Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict that you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree [...]. (1990: 39)

What follows from our putative failure to introspectively focus on the intrinsic features of our experiences and our putative success to introspectively focus on the features of the presented objects? Harman does *not* argue that it follows from the fact that one cannot introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of experience that there are no such features. Rather, he argues, against the backdrop of the plausible assumption that all there is to phenomenal character is introspectively accessible, that given that there are no intrinsic *and* introspectively discernable features of our experiences, phenomenal character is exhausted by the properties of the presented objects in those experiences. Hence, according to Harman, the transparency of experience shows that there are no intrinsic features of experiences themselves (as opposed to the intrinsic features of the objects of experiences) *that contribute to their phenomenal characters*.

Representationists and phenomenists typically agree that experiences have representational content (but disagree about whether all there is to phenomenal character is representational content). Let us call the thesis that experiences have representational contents *the content view*. Both representationists and phenomenists typically take the content view as common ground. Harman, for one, does not argue

¹² There are two clarificatory points I would like to make. Firstly, Harman's central concern in the paper is not a defense of representationism but a defense of functionalism. Harman holds that if it can be shown that representationism is true then some of the traditional arguments raised against functionalism from the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences "can be defused" (p. 31). My concern in this paper is not, however, the status of functionalism but the status of representationism, whether representationism does really receive the support from introspection and the transparency of experience that it is sometimes thought to receive. And, secondly, appeals to experiential transparency are also made in the context of a different debate, namely, the debate between representationism and naïve (or direct) realism. It is not my central aim in this paper to assess how these two views fare with respect to experiential transparency, though I will have some things to say about it in sub-section 3.1.

but simply assumes that experience is representational, and uses the terms “presentation” and “representation” interchangeably. In the quotation above, for instance, one finds Harman talking about “the features of the *presented* tree”, and in the same context asserting that “she [Eloise] has no access at all to the intrinsic features of her mental *representation* that make it a mental representation of seeing a tree” (p. 39, emphasizes mine). This practice makes sense once it is noted that it is a common ground for representationists and phenomenists that experiential presentation of an object is a form of representing it.

The dialectical work performed by the transparency of experience is, according to Harman’s reasoning, to justify the move from the content view (i.e. that the object and its features *presented* in experience are *represented*) to representationism. The idea at work is that, given that we find represented objects and their represented features in experience, and given further that the transparency of experience tells us that we do not introspectively find the features of experience itself, then the phenomenal character of experience is exhausted by the represented objects and their represented features.¹³

Now, does representationism as such need to decide between modest and ultimate transparency? The answer is “no.” In other words, it is a mistake to derive from Moore’s commitment to modest transparency the conclusion that he and the representationists belong to different camps. In particular, contra Hellie (2007), it cannot be concluded that “Although Moore and Harman are widely assumed to be allies, it is more accurate to portray them as starkly opposed” (p. 355). This is because Harman *qua* the representationist can consistently hold modest transparency, i.e. that it is difficult, but still *possible*, to introspectively attend to the act component of experiences.¹⁴ This is because, if the experiencing act does *not* have any intrinsic features (see subsection 3.4), then it cannot have anything to contribute to the phenomenal character of the experience of which it is a constituent.¹⁵ Given the dialectic between the

¹³ See Tye (2002) for one of the most systematic and careful expositions of the argument. The argument from the content view and experiential transparency to representationism can be (and has been) challenged. The most straightforward challenge is to cast doubt on the major premises, i.e. the content view and experiential transparency. However, it is also important to realize that the truth of those two premises does not entail the truth of representationism. Granting those premises, one can still challenge the argument, for instance by arguing against the assumption that all there is to phenomenal character is introspectively discernable.

¹⁴ What Harman is committed to denying and explicitly denies is that it is possible to introspectively attend to the *intrinsic features* of the act component of experiences; and, as the remarks below shall hopefully clarify, this is *not* the same as denying that it is possible to introspectively attend to the act component of experiences.

¹⁵ This also means that the representationist can consistently hold Kind’s *weak* transparency. Assuming that the experiencing act is meant by “experience,” the thesis of weak transparency says “it is difficult, but not impossible, to attend directly to the experiencing act.” The representationist can accept weak transparency if she holds that the experiencing act is featureless, which she might consistently do. Hence, Kind’s distinction

representationist and the phenomenist, what matters is whether the experiencing act has any introspectible and intrinsic features, regardless of whether the experiencing act itself is introspectible or not. The central issue in the debate between the representationists and the phenomenists is whether there is more to phenomenal character than the properties of the *objects* of experience.¹⁶ However, what matters to Moore is whether the experiencing act is introspectible, regardless of whether it has any intrinsic features that are introspectible. This is because Moore is concerned with the more *fundamental* task of arguing for the superiority of the *act-object* model over its competitors, for which he thinks phenomenological support from introspection is crucial.¹⁷

3.1. The Content View and the Relational View

An interesting question is whether the transparency of experience itself supports the content view as well as the transition from the content view to representationism. I agree with Tye that “the appeal to transparency has not been well understood” (2002: 45), at least when it comes to assessing its evidential role with respect to the content view. I am also inclined to agree with Jackson that “the usual view seems to be that diaphanousness [the transparency of experience], if accepted, is an argument in itself for representationalism [the content view]” (2007: 54), and I further agree with him that the usual view is false.

According to what is commonly called “the relational view,” perceptual experience is a matter of being in a sort of primitive and direct relation of awareness or acquaintance to certain objects.¹⁸ As such, the relational view denies what the content view claims,

between weak and strong transparency appears to be incapable of capturing the central issue in the debate between representationism and phenomenism.

¹⁶ Loar is clear that representationism can admit the possibility of introspective attention to the experiencing act: “When you attend to a visual experience as it is going on, you will notice its objects, i.e. the things you see or apparently see, including their apparent properties and relations, and *you will notice your (diaphanous) visual relation* to those external objects and properties, and representationists say, *that is all*” (2002: 77, first emphasis mine).

¹⁷ On a clear conception, one in terms of which I have formulated the debate between representationism and phenomenism, representationism is a version of the act-object model of experience, according to which the objects of experience to which the experiencing act is directed towards are represented. Representationists do not typically argue for but simply take for granted the act-object model of experience, and they are primarily in the business of arguing that the phenomenal character of experience is exhausted by represented objects and their represented properties. Stoljar (2004: 350), for one, explicitly endorses this conception of representationism. For a different conception which entails that representationism is, properly speaking, not a version of the act-object model of experience, see, for instance, Crane (2006).

¹⁸ Sense-data theories are relational views. The “relationalist” legacy of sense-data theories is inherited primarily by contemporary naïve realist views. See, for instance, Campbell (2002), Travis (2004), Brewer

i.e. that experience is representational. However, the core idea behind the transparency of experience concerns what we do not ever (or typically) find in experience through introspecting; and as such, it is silent on whether the objects of experience are represented or, say, as the relational view holds, primitively presented.¹⁹ What we do not find in experience cannot, as it were, say something about what we do find in it – whether the objects of experience are represented or primitively presented. If this is so, the transparency of experience does not prefer one of these views over the other.

A further question is whether the content view is supported by introspection in general (as opposed to experiential transparency in particular). It is again useful to raise the question in contrastive form and ask whether introspection allies with the content view or the relational view. The full dialectic required for an adequate answer to this question falls beyond the scope of this paper, but the question, I think, is still interesting enough to justify some digression. I would like to suggest that the answer to the question is “no”: introspection does not prefer the thesis that the objects of experience are represented to the thesis that they are primitively presented. I, for one, fail to see how mere introspection can possibly reveal that the objects of my experience are represented rather than being primitively presented. Moore might be right in thinking that introspection favors the act-object model of experience, according to which we are presented with *objects* in experience that are *distinct* from the experiencing act. However, that is the most it can do; mere introspection does not suggest that the objects presented to us in experience are represented. If that is so, then there are two remaining options: either introspection is neutral between the relational view and the content view, or it prefers the former to the latter. The former thesis is defended among others by Hill (2009), and the latter among others by Jackson (2007).

I hold that introspection endorses the relational view over the content view. The reason is that “no intentional content or representational properties is [introspectively]

(2006). Naïve realism is, roughly, the relational view *plus* the thesis that the objects of experience are mind-independent.

¹⁹ It seems to me that it is a mistake to suppose that it simply follows from the fact that experiences have the act-object structure or, equivalently, are “directed towards” objects that they are representational states. For instance, Macpherson (2014) writes: “Think of your visual experience of the black letters on this whitish background (the paper or the screen). The experience, one might think, seems to be about letters, the background, and their respective colors. In having the experience, your mind is directed towards these things. Elucidated thus, representation might seem a rather straightforward concept.” (p. 372). However, if there were a straightforward connection between representation and directedness, as Macpherson suggests, then there would be no substantive debate between the representationists and the relationalists (yet, there is). The question that divides these views is, I think, best formulated as follows: how are we to understand *directedness towards objects* in experience (or, to use a term that I have refrained from using so far, experiential *intentionality*), in representational terms or in terms of a primitive acquaintance relation?

manifest" (Martin, 2002: 382)²⁰ or, perhaps in other words, "introspection does not attribute a representational structure...to perceptual consciousness" (Hill, 2009: 85).²¹ Both the defenders of the relational view and the defenders of the content view hold that the objects of experience are presented to the experiencing subject. What they disagree about is whether they are *merely* presented (as in a *primitive* awareness relation) or presented in a way that can be analyzed in representational terms. Now, if, as Hill says, introspection does not attribute a representational structure to perceptual consciousness, then, *so far as introspection is concerned*, the objects of experience are *merely* presented to the experiencing subject. There might well be other, non-introspective, reasons for the content view, but introspection testifies against it.

3.2. Harmanian Transparency and Phenomenist Transparency

As I have argued in the previous subsection, the transparency of experience does not support the content view. So, I will formulate the sort of experiential transparency appealed to by representationists without assuming the truth of the content view, i.e. without assuming that experience is representational or that the objects of experience are represented. Then, we have the following:

Harmanian transparency: it is impossible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of experiences.

On the other hand, we have phenomenists holding the following thesis:

Phenomenist transparency: it is difficult but not impossible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of experiences.²²

Harman, like Kind we have discussed above, formulates his version of the transparency thesis in terms of the notion of "experience." Can we harmlessly assume that by

²⁰ This is an objection that Martin raises on behalf of the sense-datum theorists. In the final analysis, Martin seems to agree with the sense-datum theorists (2002: 392). Martin is emphatic that the fact that introspection does not support the content view does not cancel any other (non-introspective, explanatory) virtues it might have.

²¹ Demircioglu (2012) argues that there is a tension between Hill's defense of the neutrality of introspection between the relational and content views and his claim that introspection does not reveal a representative structure.

²² Some phenomenists might wish to argue for a stronger thesis that denies that there is any difficulty in introspectively attending to the intrinsic features of experiences. Some of Block's remarks might be plausibly conceived as advocating a thesis along these lines. For instance, he writes: "Harman relies on the famous diaphanousness of perception (Moore, 1922), that is, when one looks at a red tomato, the effect of concentrating on the experience of red is simply to attend to the redness of the tomato itself. As a point about introspection, this seems to me to be straightforwardly wrong" (1995: 27). It would be misleading to call such a stronger thesis along these lines as a thesis of *transparency*.

“experience”, Harman means the experiencing act? I will argue in Section 4 that the answer is no.

Before discussing the Harmanian and phenomenist transparency theses, I would like to consider in the following sub-section what representationists including Harman typically think about the object component of experiences, i.e. the component that is not transparent to introspection.

3.3. Mind-Independence

Harman stresses that the objects presented to the subject in experiences are mind-independent. He writes:

What Eloise sees before her is a tree, whether or not it is a hallucination. That is to say, the content of her experience is that she is presented with a tree, not with the idea of a tree. Perhaps, Eloise’s visual experience involves some sort of mental picture of the environment. It does not follow that she is aware of a mental picture. If there is a mental picture, it may be that what she is aware of is whatever is represented by that mental picture, but then that mental picture represents something in the world, not something in the mind. (1990: 36, emphases mine)

There are a number of philosophers who agree with Harman that introspection presents us with mind-independent objects, and thus formulate the thesis of experiential transparency in terms of such objects. Here is an incomplete, yet representative list:

Visual experience is transparent: when you attend to a visual experience as it is going on, you will notice its objects, i.e. the things you see or apparently see, including their apparent properties and relations, and you will notice your (diaphanous) visual relation to those *external objects* and properties. (Loar, 2003:1, emphasis mine)

Introspection indicates that our sensory experiences are directed on, or are about, *the mind-independent entities in the world around us*, that our sense experience is transparent to *the world...* I have identified two aspects of experiential transparency: the manifest presence of *external objects*, and the apparent absence of experience. (Martin, 2002: 376, emphases mine)

Keeping the focus on material objects, they have a substantial presence to us. Adding a bit to this point, material things have a *dominant* perceptual presence to us. In many paradigmatic cases of visual experience, *material objects* seem to exhaust the territory of which we have a view. (Kennedy, 2009: 576, second emphasis mine)

The claim that perceptual experiences are transparent is the claim that when you turn your attention to any given experience, the only features you can become aware of seem to you to be features of *ordinary physical things*. (Millar, 2014: 241, emphasis mine)²³

²³ I take it that what these authors mean by such notions as “external,” “material” and “ordinary physical” is relevantly similar to what is commonly meant by “mind-independent.”

Let us concede, for the sake of the argument, that introspection supports the act-object model of experiences, i.e. that having experiences is a matter of standing in a certain sort of relational act to certain objects is introspectively discernable. This means that introspection supports the thesis that the act component of experience is *distinct* from its object component: experiencing is one thing and its objects is another, and that they are distinct is introspectively discernable. Following Millar (2014), let me call this feature of experience *object-distinctness*. And let me call the thesis that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent *mind-independence*.

The question I want to raise is whether object-distinctness entails mind-independence.²⁴ Once the question is stated thus explicitly, the answer, I think, is a clear “no.” That the object of an experience introspectively seems to be distinct from the experiencing act does not entail that the object introspectively seems to be mind-independent. In other words, the object of an experience may introspectively seem to be distinct from the experiencing act without seeming to be independent from the perceiver’s mind. This might be either because the object seems to be mind-dependent or because it seems to be simply “topic-neutral” *vis-à-vis* its relation to the perceiver’s mind. Furthermore, it appears that object-distinctness does not even entail that the objects of experience seem to be independent from the experiencing act (let alone from the perceiver’s mind in general). Along with their sustained emphasis on the difference between the act and object components of experience, many sense-data theorists would deny that the object of experience seems to have a sort of existence independent from the experiencing act. And, there is no obvious inconsistency in doing both.

Mind-independence does not follow from object-distinctness; hence, even if object-distinctness is, as I simply assume, supported by introspection, mind-independence is not supported by introspection on the basis of the support it provides to object-distinctness. However, it might be claimed that introspection provides evidence for mind-independence through a different route. It might be argued that just as the object of an experience introspectively seems to be distinct from the act, the object also introspectively seems to be independent from the act and from the perceiving mind in general. So, while conceding that object-distinctness does not entail mind-

²⁴ Millar (2014) does not discuss in any detail whether mind-independence follows from object-distinctness, but simply assumes that it does. Millar writes: “When you have a perceptual experience it seems to be the case that something *distinct* from your consciousness is *immediately present* to your consciousness” (p. 241, emphasis original). He also writes: “When you enjoy a perceptual experience, physical things and their properties seem to be directly present to you” (p. 239). The context leaves no doubt that Millar treats these two statements as equivalent. So, for Millar, object-distinctness *is* mind-independence.

independence, it might still be held that through introspecting our experiences we find both.

There are at least two reasons against the idea that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent. One reason has to do with the traditional distinction between what we ordinarily (or naturally, or intuitively) *think* of the objects of our experiences, and how exactly those objects *seem* to us through introspection proper. It might be granted that we ordinarily think of the objects of our experiences as existing independently of our minds, and the following observations might plausibly be taken as expressions of this common-sense thought:²⁵

The most intuitively attractive way of characterizing my state of consciousness...is to say that it consists of the *presentation of physical objects* to consciousness. (Alston, 1999: 182, first emphasis mine)

Mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as, in Kantian phrase, an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of things outside us. (Strawson, 1979: 47, first emphasis mine)

One might agree with Alston and Strawson's observations about "the most intuitively attractive way" of describing experiences and how "mature sensible experience" presents itself, but still hold that the most intuitively attractive way need not be how things seem to us through introspection proper and also that how mature sensible experience presents itself does not necessarily coincide with how sensible experience as such (unloaded by the "world-view" we acquire in maturity) presents itself.

It might be (and has been) plausibly claimed that what we might call the "ordinary conception" of our experiences is one thing, and what "introspection proper" reveals about those experiences is another.²⁶ What we ordinarily think of the objects of our experiences need not match what introspection proper, as it were, tells us about them. It seems that we can keep the latter while changing the former. There does not seem to be any difficulty, for instance, in conceiving a subjective idealist whose experiences have the same phenomenology as our experiences but who "ordinarily" (not just at those "philosophical" moments) thinks that the objects presented in those experiences

²⁵ Even this trivial-looking idea can be reasonably challenged. Consider how Berkeley's mouthpiece Philonous responds to Hylas' rhetorical question:

Hylas: What! Can anything be more fantastical, more repugnant to common sense, or a more manifest piece of scepticism, than to believe that there is no such thing as *matter*?

Philonous: Softly, good Hylas. What if it should prove, that you, who hold there is, are by virtue of that opinion a greater *sceptic*, and maintain more paradoxes and repugnancies to common sense, than I who believe no such thing? (Berkeley, 1999: 108)

²⁶ See Raleigh (2009) for an illuminating discussion of this distinction.

are mind-dependent. If introspection proper captures those aspects of her and our experiences by virtue of which they have the same phenomenology, as it is natural to suggest, then introspection proper is silent on whether the objects of visual experiences are mind-dependent or not.

There are a number of possible rejoinders to this argument from the conceivability of an unwavering subjective idealist, only one of which I will consider. One might argue that *if*, as we are invited to hypothesize, our and the subjective idealist's experiences have the same phenomenology, then the correct thing to say is that it *introspectively* appears to that idealist that the objects of her experiences are mind-independent, *despite* what she "ordinarily" thinks of them. According to this line of response, what our introspection delivers accords with what we ordinarily think of the objects of experience; however, what the subjective idealist's introspection delivers disagrees with what she "ordinarily" thinks of them.

I think this response fails for the following reason: the subjective idealist can also take a similar line and argue that it is *our* introspections that run against what *we* ordinarily think of the objects of our experiences. It seems to me that such a maneuver would effectively undermine the idea that our ordinary thoughts, but not those of the subjective idealist, get the deliverances of introspection right: whatever force our claim has, the subjective idealist's claim seems to have the same. Therefore, it seems arbitrary to claim that *our* ordinary thoughts are favored by introspection. I, for one, fail to see how a proponent of the thesis of mind-independence can (even start to) provide reasons for the thesis that introspection is on her side. However, if this is so, then the proper conclusion to be gleaned is that introspection is silent on the question of whether the objects presented in experience are mind-independent.²⁷

The other reason against thinking that the objects of experience introspectively appear to be mind-independent has to do with whether mind-independence is a *possible* object of introspective attention. Note that mind-independence is a counter-factual property:

²⁷ It is worth noting that a version of the subjective idealist's response would *not* be effective against a version of the argument above that focuses on such features as color, shape, and location. Consider an unwavering projectivist about color, whose experiences have the same phenomenology as our experiences, but who "ordinarily" (not just at those "philosophical" moments) thinks that the objects presented in those experiences are not colorful (and that colors are only exemplified, say, by the experiencing acts). Such a projectivist cannot plausibly argue that it is *our* ordinary thoughts about the colors of the objects presented in experience that run against the deliverances of introspection. We would then rightly protest that the projectivist in question fails to grasp either what the sameness of phenomenology amounts to or what introspection proper can deliver. However, the subjective idealist *might* have a proper grasp of both while still *consistently* claiming that it is our ordinary thoughts that get the phenomenology of experiences wrong. Raleigh (2009) raises the worry here as follows: "Do we really want to say that we can see an object's mind-independence in the same way that we can see its size or its shape?" (p. 76)

the object of my experience exists independently of my experience in that it *would* exist if I were *not* perceiving it. The question, then, is whether counter-factual properties can be introspected. Now, it is typically (and, I think, plausibly) taken as a constraint on the range of features that fall within the scope of introspection that it comprises only those things that can be “ostensively referred” to (Hellie, 2007: 340), or, equivalently, can be picked out by wondering “what is *that*?” (Tye 2009, p. 100), or (perhaps) still equivalently, that we can be aware *de re* of (Tye, 2009: 118). Given that mind-independence as a counter-factual property is not a feature of objects that can be ostensively referred to, there is good reason to think that it cannot be introspected.²⁸

So, there are strong reasons that count against the thesis that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent and in favor of the idea that mind-independence is a conceptually optional add-on. I do not mean to imply that the two reasons just adduced are decisive but only that it cannot simply be taken for granted that we are introspectively presented with mind-independent objects. If anything, just the opposite appears to be correct: the objects of experience do *not* introspectively seem to be mind-independent (which is *not* to say that they introspectively seem to be mind-dependent). In fact, if mind-independence is a counter-factual property, and if counter-factual properties cannot be introspected, then the objects of experience cannot introspectively seem to be mind-independent. I suggest that one possible source of the assumption that the thesis of mind-independence enjoys introspective support stems from assuming that mind-independence follows from object-distinctness, which is itself taken to be introspectively discernable. However, as I have argued, there are good reasons to think that the latter assumption is false.²⁹

3.4. Phenomenist Transparency

Before considering Harmanian transparency in the next section, I would like to close this section with an answer to the question of how phenomenist transparency is related to modest transparency. Does it follow, for instance, from Moore’s commitment to the

²⁸ See Campbell (2002), Millar (2014) and Demircioglu (2015) for further discussion.

²⁹ Broad’s following remarks are sometimes quoted in the literature in support of the thesis that introspection reveals mind-independent objects: “In its purely phenomenological aspect seeing is ostensibly salutatory. It seems to leap the spatial gap between the percipient’s body and a remote region of space. Then, again, it is ostensibly prehensive of the surfaces of distant bodies as colored and extended... It is a natural, if paradoxical, way of speaking to say that seeing seems to ‘bring one into direct contact with remote objects’ and to reveal their shapes and colors” (1952: 10). For lack of space, I will not discuss these remarks in detail, but I hope the reader will allow me to barely assert that, intended as a description of the “purely phenomenological aspect” of seeing, there are good reasons for doubting the accuracy of Broad’s observations.

latter that he is committed to the former? I will argue that the two transparency theses are distinct, and Moore is not committed to phenomenist transparency.

Phenomenist transparency is, let us recall, the thesis that it is possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of experiences. Modest transparency is the thesis that it is possible to introspectively attend to the experiencing act. Now, assuming that what is meant by “experience” in the formulation of phenomenist transparency is the experiencing act,³⁰ it is clear that phenomenist transparency follows from modest transparency only if introspective attention to the experiencing act requires introspective attention to its intrinsic features. However, this conditional can be intelligibly challenged. That is, it seems that one can consistently deny that it is possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the experiencing act while accepting that it is possible to introspectively attend to the experiencing act.

Let us consider the view that the experiencing act is “featureless,” in other words that it does not have any intrinsic features. More specifically, let us consider the following view that Butchvarov attributes to Sartre and (rather hesitatingly) to Moore:

[Sartre] held (1) that a consciousness (or, we may say, an act or a state of consciousness) necessarily has an object, it is always of, directed toward, something, and (2) that the consciousness has no contents, no intrinsic constitution, that everything it is it owes to its object. This view is strikingly similar to Moore’s...It is that if you try to consider the (act of) consciousness you do find something, but something that is entirely transparent, translucent, without any nature or character or content of its own. (1998: 25)³¹

A defender of this “featureless experiencing” view holds that it is not possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the experiencing act, because there are none; however, he might still claim that it is possible to introspectively attend to the experiencing act. After all, as Butchvarov describes the view, “you do find something” (that is, “the (act of) consciousness”) when you introspect, whereas that thing does not have any intrinsic nature of its own.

4. Harmanian Transparency

Harmanian transparency is, let us recall, the following thesis:

³⁰ See fn. 32 below.

³¹ Van Cleve and Hill attribute what I call the “featureless experiencing” view to Moore. Van Cleve writes: “Moore denies that experiences have intrinsic features. Instead, they owe everything they are to their relation to their objects” (2005: 217). And Hill writes: “According to Moore, consciousness is featureless” (2009: 77). It is clear that Van Cleve and Hill mean the experiencing act by “experience” and “consciousness,” respectively.

Harmanian transparency: it is impossible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of experiences.

On a straightforward interpretation, what Harman means by “experience” is, as I have suggested earlier, “the experiencing act”. So, we have the following version:

Experiencing-act transparency: it is impossible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the experiencing act.

It is important to note that despite the fact that Moore does *not* endorse ultimate transparency, but only modest transparency (see Section 2), he might still be reasonably interpreted as holding experiencing-act transparency. Ultimate transparency entails experiencing-act transparency, but the converse does not (or need not) hold. There might well be good reasons for attributing Moore the view that the experiencing act does not have any intrinsic features (see subsection 3.4). Furthermore, if Moore holds this “featureless experiencing” view, then he is thereby committed to the *impossibility* of introspectively attending to the intrinsic features of the experiencing act whilst holding that it *is* possible to introspectively attend to the experiencing act. The contemporary debate on Moore’s views concerning introspection and transparency usually fails to take note of the distinction between ultimate and experiencing-act transparency and the distinction between modest and phenomenist transparency. However, it seems to me that without these distinctions at hand, no serious lesson about Moore’s position can be reasonably drawn.

I now turn to a central question of this section: is the transparency thesis Harman argues for experiencing-act transparency? I claim in the following subsection that the answer is no.

4.1. “Mental Paint”

Harman formulates the thesis of experiential transparency he endorses in terms of the notion of “mental paint.” He writes:

In the case of a painting Eloise can be aware of those features of the painting that are responsible for its being a painting of a unicorn. That is, she can turn her attention to the pattern of the paint on the canvas by virtue of which the painting represents a unicorn. But in the case of her visual experience of a tree, I want to say that she is not aware of, as it were, the mental paint by virtue of which her experience is an experience of seeing a tree. (1990: 39)

Mental paint is the mental analogue of the paint of a real painting. It is the paint on what one might call “the mental canvas” *by virtue of which a given experience has the*

content it has. Such remarks strongly suggest that the transparency of experience that Harman endorses concerns the mental paint or picture of experience. So, we have the following version of Harmanian transparency:

Mental-paint transparency: it is impossible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the mental paint.

It is clear that mental-paint transparency is different from experiencing-act transparency, because mental paint involves those intrinsic features of an experience by virtue of which that experience has, say, the content with the tree as its intentional object, and also because it is *not* by virtue of the experiencing act that that experience has *that* content. This is, in turn, because the experiencing act would otherwise always have the same content, although, clearly, the experiencing act might be directed towards different contents. The mental paint gives the content with the tree as a constituent, i.e. the content towards which the experiencing act is directed. The central point is that mental paint *is* a vehicle of representation, whereas the experiencing act is *not*. The intrinsic features of the experiencing act, if there are any, fall under what Block (1995) calls *mental latex* (as opposed to *mental paint*), which involves those “properties of the experience that don’t represent anything” (p. 29).³²

An instructive way to get a better understanding of the thesis of mental-paint transparency is by appreciating what Harman defends that thesis against, and the answer is the sense-datum theory (see especially pp. 34-40).³³ The sense-datum theory

³² Just as Harmanian transparency admits two different interpretations, namely experiencing-act transparency and mental-paint transparency, phenomenist transparency also admits two correspondingly different interpretations, which I label *phenomenist experiencing-act transparency* and *phenomenist mental-paint transparency*. According to phenomenist experiencing-act transparency, it is (difficult but still) possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the experiencing act; and, according to phenomenist mental-paint transparency, it is (difficult but still) possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the mental paint. Two sorts of cases that phenomenists typically appeal to in their attack on representationism are blurry vision and double vision (see, for instance, Boghossian and Velleman (1989) and Tye (2002)), and it seems to me that these cases support different phenomenist transparency theses. In the case of blurry vision, phenomenists argue that blurriness is not presented as a property of the objects of experience but as a property of the experiencing act itself: what introspectively seems to be blurry is not the objects but the experiencing itself. So, this case is better conceived as providing support for phenomenist *experiencing-act* transparency. However, in the case of double vision, what introspectively appears to be double cannot be the experiencing-act itself but could reasonably be taken as those features of the experience by virtue of which it has a certain content. Consequently, double vision is better interpreted as providing support for phenomenist *mental-paint* transparency.

³³ The only alternative to representationism that is taken into consideration in Harman (1990) is the sense-datum theory, and this suggests that Harman assumes in that paper a particular conception of “qualia” (or “phenomenal qualities”), according to which qualia are intrinsic, consciously accessible and non-representational properties of *sense-data*, and takes himself to be arguing that there are no qualia thus understood. For a similar conception of qualia, see Tye (1994: 61). It has later been clearly recognized by

holds that what one is directly aware of when one perceives, say, a tree is not the tree itself, but something like the intrinsic features of a mental picture by virtue of which the tree is represented in the experience. According to this theory, experiences do not enable the experiencing subject to have direct contact with the external, mind-independent world; rather, experiences are regarded as openness to a kind of private inner realm (the mental paint) that is interposed between the subject and the world. In line with this, sense-datum theorists hold that what one finds through introspecting one's own experiences is the intrinsic features of the mental paint.

If the thesis of mental-paint transparency is true, then it straightforwardly follows that sense-datum theorists are wrong in thinking that we can introspect mental paint. Harman insists that this thesis is supported by introspection. What we find through introspecting our experiences, Harman claims, are not mind-dependent, inner objects that are interposed between us and mind-independent objects, but mind-independent objects themselves. According to him, it is introspectively clear that the objects of our experiences are (or seem to be) mind-independent (or that they reach all the way to the mind-independent objects themselves). Therefore, Harman holds, introspection testifies against the sense-datum theory and supports mental-paint transparency instead.

The argument Harman has in mind for the thesis of mental-paint transparency seems to run as follows: the objects of experience introspectively appear to be mind-independent; if it were possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the mental paint, then the objects of experience would introspectively appear to be mind-dependent; therefore, it is not possible to introspectively attend to the intrinsic features of the mental paint (the thesis of mental-paint transparency). It seems to me that either premise can be plausibly challenged. However, my objection below will be specifically directed against the premise asserting that the objects of experience introspectively appear to be mind-dependent.

4.2. Mental-Paint Transparency

Does the thesis of mental-paint transparency accurately represent what we find in our experiences through introspecting them? Does introspection support the thesis that it is *impossible* to attend to the intrinsic features of the mental paint? The answer I give to these questions is based on the answer I give to the question above, i.e. whether the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent. The reasons

various philosophers that there is another conception of qualia that does not entail the existence of sense-data. For an excellent discussion of various conceptions of "qualia", see Tye (2015).

presented for a negative answer to the latter question also count as reasons for a negative answer to the former questions. The argument for the thesis of mental-paint transparency rests on the premise that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent. However, if this premise is false (which is, to emphasize, not to say that those objects introspectively seem to be mind-dependent), then it might well be the case, *so far as introspection is concerned*, that the objects of experience are sense-data and their features (i.e. Harman's mental paint) and therefore that we might well attend to sense-data and their features. If this is so, then the *impossibility* claim in the thesis of mental-paint transparency is not supported by introspection.

The central idea here is that introspection supports the thesis of mental-paint transparency only if the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent. This is because if the objects of experience do not introspectively seem to be mind-independent, then so far as introspection is concerned, the objects of introspective attention might well be internal or mind-dependent. However, there are strong reasons for doubting that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent (see subsection 3.3). Therefore, there are strong reasons for holding that introspection does not support the thesis of mental-paint transparency: for all introspection tells us, we *might* well be attending to the intrinsic features of the mental paint.³⁴ If the objects of experience do not introspectively appear to be mind-independent, then mere introspection does not by itself support the thesis that we cannot introspectively attend to the mind-dependent features of the mental paint.

An instructive way to get a better idea of the objection I am raising against the thesis of mental-paint transparency is to formulate it in terms of the traditional debate between direct realism and indirect realism. The central question around which this debate is structured is whether we are (ever) directly aware of mind-independent, worldly objects through having perceptual experiences. The answer direct realism gives to this question is "yes", and the answer indirect realism gives is "no". According to indirect realism, we are (always) aware of mind-independent objects only by being directly aware of mind-dependent, internal objects like ideas or images (as classical empiricists put it³⁵) or sense-data. Mind-dependent objects, on indirect realism, figure in our experiences as constituents of "a veil of perception" over the external world, and what we can find through introspecting our experiences is only a sort of "interface" between

³⁴ In particular, mere introspection does not disfavor a view like Papineau's defended in a recent article: "I deny that *any* of the conscious features of experience are representational. In my view, it's all paint" (2014: 2).

³⁵ As Hume, for instance, writes: "Nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception, and...senses are only the inlets, through which these images are conveyed, without being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object" (1748/2000, Sect. 12, p. 152).

the subject and the external world. So far as I can see, Harman's "mental paint" is just another word for the good old notions "veil of perception" and "(perceptual) interface," and indirect realism is a view about the nature of perceptual experience that denies Harman's thesis of mental-paint transparency: it is, according to indirect realism, the mental-paint (or "the veil") that we can only introspectively attend to – we cannot introspectively "see through" it. Now, the question whether introspection supports the thesis of mental-paint transparency can be adequately understood as the question whether introspection counts against (or otherwise disfavors) indirect realism, and the answer Harman gives to both questions is "yes". However, my point is that introspective evidence counts against indirect realism only if the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent and there are good reasons to think that they do not introspectively seem to be mind-independent. So, the conclusion is that there are good reasons to think that introspection does not count against indirect realism, according to which all we can introspect is the mental paint.

Once the issues involved in the discussions of experiential transparency are clearly disentangled from one another, I believe that it is relatively easy to see that there are strong reasons against mental-paint transparency. Firstly, we need to distinguish object-distinctness from mind-independence; we also need to further appreciate that the latter does not follow from the former, and that there are good reasons against thinking that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent. Secondly, mental-paint transparency is conceptually independent from experiential-act transparency, and a failure to appreciate the distinction might result in assuming that the former enjoys the same introspective support as the latter (which, I would like to note in passing, is strong). Thirdly, and finally, the question whether introspection supports mental-paint transparency should be distinguished from the question whether there are any good arguments or sophisticated reasons against the sense-datum theory. Harman (1990), for instance, goes to great lengths to show that the argument from illusion for the sense-datum theory is "either invalid or question-begging" (p. 39). If Harman is right that the argument from illusion suffers from some hideous defects, then the sense-datum theorists might well be wrong in thinking that they have good theoretical reasons for holding that the objects of experience are mind-independent. Nevertheless, that by itself has no bearing on whether mere introspection disfavors the sense-datum theory. Or, conversely, we might have good arguments for the thesis that the objects of experience are mind-independent. For instance, it has been claimed in the literature that the question of how our perceptual experiences justify our beliefs about the external world can only be adequately answered by holding that the objects of experience are mind-independent. However, the point is that such sophisticated reasons do not appear to have any bearing on what introspection by itself favors.

It is worth noting that an interpretive puzzle about Moore's position receives a straightforward dissolution by drawing the above distinctions between non-equivalent transparency theses. The puzzle is this: how can Moore, *qua* a defender of the sense-datum theory, plausibly hold that our experience and its features are transparent to introspection? Is there not an obvious tension between those two theses? Martin (2002) writes:

Talk of the diaphanous nature or transparent nature of experience traces back to Moore's infamous attack on idealism, but it is not clear that its current usage really matches what Moore had in mind (after all, Moore himself endorsed a form of the sense-datum theory of perception). (p. 378, fn. 3)³⁶

Here, Martin not only gives expression to the puzzle, but also points to the direction we should take. Martin is right that it is not clear that the current usage of "the transparency of experience" matches what Moore had in mind. In fact, given what I have argued above, it is clear that it does *not* match. The putative puzzle arises only if we assume that Moore endorses mental-paint transparency. Holding both the thesis of mental-paint transparency and the sense-datum theory would be a serious confusion, one we should hesitate to attribute to a philosopher like Moore; *that* would really be a puzzle. However, Moore does not endorse mental-paint transparency. All we can attribute to him is a different transparency thesis, which is the thesis of modest transparency articulated in Section 2. Failure to appreciate distinctions such as these gives rise to puzzles that are otherwise avoidable.

5. Conclusion

Let me finish by highlighting the central theses that I have argued for in this paper. Firstly, Moore holds the thesis of modest transparency, and is primarily concerned with showing that the experiencing act is not ultimately transparent. Secondly, representationists can consistently agree with Moore that the experiencing act is only modestly, but not ultimately, transparent. Thirdly, the transparency thesis that representationism endorses is Harmanian transparency. Fourthly, Harmanian transparency can be understood in two different ways, *viz.* experiencing-act transparency and mental-paint transparency. Fifthly, the thesis of mental-paint transparency is supported by introspection only if the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent but there are powerful reasons to think that they do not introspectively seem to be mind-independent.

³⁶ Stoljar (2005) states the puzzle as follows: "The puzzle starts from the observation that the Moore to whom the insight concerning diaphanousness is credited is the very same Moore who famously defended the sense-datum theory" (p. 6). The puzzle is also mentioned by Tye (2002).

There is no such thing as *the* thesis of experiential transparency, and the standard distinction in the literature between weak and strong transparency is incapable of doing justice to the richness of the options available. What we rather have is a long list of non-equivalent transparency theses, some of which are better supported than others by introspection, and some of which are loaded with theoretical presuppositions on which introspection is simply silent. Specifying what mere introspection can tell us about our experiences is a notoriously tricky business, but this should not serve as a license for *assuming* that the objects of experience introspectively seem to be mind-independent (rather than merely distinct from the experiencing act) or represented (as opposed to primitively presented). A broader lesson I draw can perhaps be expressed as a dilemma: either separate the wheat of introspection proper from the chaff of ordinary opinion about experience, or stop claiming that introspection by itself favors a particular account of experience.

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