

Objective Mind and the Objectivity of Our Minds

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A Plea for Help

The point of this paper is to simply frame and illuminate a novel hypothesis in the theory of mental content, a hypothesis which many will find outrageous. In presenting the hypothesis, I shall not mince words; I shall write as if it is true, so that the exposition goes more smoothly. My original hope was that after the outrageous hypothesis had been set out, orthodoxy would be vindicated, for it then would be clear just why the hypothesis must be rejected. Well, it may be clear why the hypothesis should be rejected, but I must confess that it is not clear to me. So this is a plea for help: Here follows a hypothesis, help me to see just why it couldn't be so!

Presence

Consider presence, the variety of ways in which real or ostensible items, be they objects, qualities or whatever, disclose some aspect of their nature. Perhaps the best way to bring presence into view is to begin with perception. When one sees one's dogs running in the front yard, the whole content of the perceptual experience is of the dogs and their running being present in a certain way, a way that discloses something of the nature of the dogs and their running. **THERE** the dogs are, immediately available as objects of attention and demonstration, and as topics of one's further thought and talk.

The same could be said of one's bodily sensational states such as pain and nausea; in those states certain qualities are presented as part of a quasi-three-dimensional body image, as it were a volume of felt quality. **THERE** those qualities are, immediately available as objects of thought and talk.

As well as perceptual and bodily sensational presence there is also intellectual presence where what is made present are objects of judgment and belief, namely propositions whose truth or falsity determine

the truth or falsity of the judgment or belief. Because most thought involves the exploitation of conventional systems of signs, propositions are typically made present in thought by way of the meanings conventionally associated with the signs employed.¹ Thanks to this, THERE those propositions are, available as objects of attention, manipulation in further thought, and as things to be judged true or false, and believed or disbelieved.

Once presence comes into view, something more can be said about perception, bodily sensation, and thought. Perceptual experiences, somatic experiences and thoughts are individuated by the items they present or make available, and by the ways in which they present or make available those items. My seeing my dogs running is not some state or event which just happens to be about my dogs, my feeling pain is not just some state or event that happens to be directed upon pain, and my thinking that Vienna is delightful is not some state or event that happens to concern Vienna. The connection between a state that makes something present and what it makes present is not an accidental feature of that state, it enters into the essence of that state, it partly defines what it is to be that state.

As we will see, this means that there must be something wrong with thinking of such states as just consisting in representations of what they are about, representations that get to be *of* or *about* their targets because of some happy mix of relations like causation and descriptive matching. For those relations do not hold essentially of the things of which they happen to hold.

Is Being Almost Entirely Wasted?

On the standard view of the relation between consciousness and reality, most of being is absolutely wasted, for only an infinitesimally small fraction of what exists is ever present, i.e., ever discloses or reveals some aspect of its nature. On this view, when the last individual consciousness ceases to be, the very local phenomenon of presence will end. The lights will have gone out, all over the universe, never to go on again.

This way of thinking both about the nature of reality and the nature of consciousness, treats us as “Producers of Presence”; that is, beings whose psychological operations are the very preconditions of presence or disclosure. As a way of thinking, this stands unopposed in

¹ Which is not to say that the words, as they figure in my thoughts, are contingently related to their conventional meanings. The words that figure in my thoughts, figure as semantically interpreted words. So here too there is no room for a verbalized thought turning out to be contingently related to the proposition it is directed at.

contemporary philosophy; that we are Producers of Presence is not even a *formulated* thesis, since it is treated as the most obvious common sense, a bedrock starting point.

To find any sort of alternative to it you would have to turn back to Spinoza, or Maimonides, or Ibn Sina, or better to the passage which influenced them all, namely Aristotle's amazing lines on the Active Intellect in *De Anima* Book 3, Chapter 5.

[M]ind as we have described it is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another Mind which is what it is by virtue of making all things be present: this is a sort of positive state like light...

Only in such places do we find the idea of mind as thoroughly objective, and of presence as already fully actualized, independently of the psychological operations of particular human beings. In Aristotle, Ibn Sina and Maimonides it is *intellectual* presence that is understood as already fully actualized; individual intellectual acts partake of this pre-existing presence and access their contents from it. I believe that a similar view can be made out when it comes to perceptual and bodily sensory presence. In fact, the very immediacy of perceptual and sensory experience provides one route to the idea of pre-existing presence.

Opposed to the hypothesis that we are Producers of Presence is the hypothesis that we are, thanks to our distinctive sensibility, highly selective Samplers of Presence. On this hypothesis, being is by its nature present; being's fundamental activity is self-disclosure. (Yes, I do know where that leads...) All the modes of presentation of each existing thing, be they intellectual or sensory modes, all the possible ways of thinking and sensing each such thing, come into being with the things themselves, whether or not there are any individual minds to sample these modes of presentation, i.e. to access them in individual mental acts.

Presentation and Representation

Are we Producers or Samplers of Presence? Our verdict on that will determine our answer to the basic question of intentionality: How could an inner mental state of a person, something wholly constituted by his brain states, be *about* an item that exists independently of those states?

Here, in the face of this question, the almost universal conviction that we are Producers of Presence relies on an auxiliary hypothesis, the hypothesis of natural representation. Inner mental states, wholly

constituted by their associated brain states, are natural representational states; they involve natural, as opposed to conventional, representations of items in the external environment.

The primal scene for the emergence of the idea of natural representation might be taken to be the scene inside the *camera obscura*, an optical device used in the early Renaissance in perspective-preserving drawing. (The *camera obscura* is first described by Leonardo da Vinci in his *Codex Atlanticus*, though *camerae obscurae* may have existed even as early as the tenth century.) The *camera obscura* is a dark box or chamber with a small aperture on one side. Light from an external scene passes through the aperture and strikes a specific part of the far wall of the dark chamber, projecting an inverted image of the external scene. Standing in the box, one can see the inverted image of the external scene, preserved in perspective. The image can be traced in order to sketch the basis for a realistic painting of the scene.

The inverted image is a non-conventional or “natural” representation of the external scene. It is caused by the external scene in a particularly direct and salient way, and it resembles the scene in obvious ways. That is why it is useful as a template for a realistic painting of the scene.

At first, the further, and rather seductive, philosophical gloss on all this seems entirely innocent: It is *thanks* to this favorable mix of causation and resemblance that the inverted image gets to be *of* or *about* the scene external to the chamber. The same could be said of images in mirrors; they may be taken to be natural representations, which get to be *of* or *about* their originals thanks to a favorable mix of causation and resemblance.

So the dominating scheme of thought has it that the allegedly natural representational capacities of the brain also get to be *of* or *about* scenes in the external world thanks to some favorable mix of causation and resemblance.

The hypothesis of natural representation appears to work smoothly with the unquestioned hypothesis that we are Producers of Presence. A scene in the external world causes one’s brain to go into a certain natural representational state; that state is appropriately caused by the scene and in a certain way resembles it, perhaps by way of complex isomorphisms. That is why the state gets to be *of* the external scene. That scene becomes present, and this means present *to a subject*, because that subject has a natural representation of the scene caused in him by that very scene, a representation that is also in significant ways like the scene. Without such causal transactions and resembling natural representations nothing would be present. So the disappearance of individual minds and the brain-like-systems which could be the sites of such

natural representations means the end of presence. For presence is produced by the environment's causing natural representations in such minds and systems.

Throughout contemporary philosophy and cognitive science we find the conviction that something like this *must be right*, even if the details have to undergo some revision in order to handle particular cases. How could it be otherwise?

Are There Natural Representations?

Yet even in the case of mirror images, or images on the walls of *camerae obscurae*, the hypothesis of natural representation seems misplaced. In fact, those images get to be *of* or *about* their originals because we *see them and treat them as of or about* their originals. This can shown by a double strategy of ringing the changes on causation, and sifting through the claims to resemblance.

A scheme of mirrors and light filters might be added to the inside of a *camera obscura* so that an image appears anamorphically, and in colors complementary to that of its original. Is it still a natural representation of its original, and if so, has there not been a very significant change in the pattern of causation which led to its production? Whence the conviction that there must be some unifying description of such different patterns of causation, a description which could then be put forward as a necessary part of a set of sufficient conditions for one thing, a natural representation, being *of or about* another? Must there be a unifying description which could play this role? Isn't it likely that the various causal processes by which representational states are produced do not form a natural class?

So consider the Sudarium of Orvieto, taken by some to be the towel which Veronica offered to Christ to cover his bloody face on the road to Calvary. Suppose for a moment that it contains, as the believers in the relic say, a blood-stained image of the face of Christ. Is there any interesting causal connection between the Sudarium and the face of Christ that is also found between a mirror image and its original? Or is it just that thanks to some causal connection or other, an image is produced which we *see as* the face of Christ, given how we now imagine that face?

The same pressure from ringing the changes on causation could be applied by considering the Shroud of Turin, where some have alleged that a *supernatural* causality, having to do with Christ's resurrected body emanating though the Shroud, was behind the truly incredible image on the Shroud. Suppose for a moment that the supporters of the relic had been right in this; then it would also be right to say that the

image on the Shroud is the image *of* the crucified body of Christ. But how can this pattern of supernatural causation also be assimilated to the paradigm pattern supposedly required for natural representation to be *of* or *about* its original? Or is it just that, however the Shroud was produced, we have there an image which *puts us in mind of* the crucified Christ (as we now imagine him)?

If that is right, it simply a mistake to think that there is a characteristic pattern of causation that is required for a natural representation to be *of* or *about* a certain original item. The role of causation here is just to create something that has certain features which enable us to use it to bring to mind the original. And that may mean, as it does in the case of the Crucified Christ, just *imagining* the original.

Turn now to the issue of resemblance. A story is told of Igor Stravinsky, who was getting increasingly irritated by a talkative man in the train seat alongside him. When the man, after describing his young wife in glowing terms, reached into his pocket and pulled a wallet-sized photograph of her; Stravinsky cupped the photo in both hands, and then remarked “She is quite small, isn’t she?” In looking at photographs, and seeing them as representations of their originals, we have learnt to ignore the manifest dissimilarities between image and original. Likewise, the images on the walls of *camerae obscurae*, and in mirrors, are in many ways nothing like their originals. We have learnt to construe such images, i.e. to focus on similarities between image and original, and neglect “irrelevant” differences.

By considerations like these we can be led to realize that the paradigm cases of natural representation were just cases in which we found it natural to use the image to put us in mind of the original. They were not instances of a natural two place relation of intentionality or *aboutness* holding between image and original, instances which we then could explore in order to find the favorable mix of causation and resemblance which makes a representation *about* its original. Rather they were instances of the three place relation of *our* finding it natural to use the *image* to put us in mind of *the original*. In this relation our intentional attitude directed to the image is crucial, and in a way that bodes ill for any reductive account of intentionality that relies on “natural representation” as its inspiration.

Representation and “Carrying Information”

Still, many philosophers just cannot see how we could be anything other than Producers of Presence, and so they still maintain faith in there being some kind of correct Representationalist treatment of mental states.

So, it is said, that thanks to their history and intrinsic characteristics, representational states “carry” descriptive information. The standard analogy is with the rings in a tree trunk, which carry information about just how old the tree is. Here too however, we seem to be suppressing an argument place important to the real relation in play. The rings in the tree trunk carry information about the age of the tree, relative to certain techniques of examination and interpretation which *we* possess.

Still, let us allow that something can be made of certain brain states carrying descriptive information. The Representationalist idea may now be put like this; those states are *of* or *about* some item in the external environment just in case that item is the unique satisfier of that descriptive information.

It fills one with an uncanny sense of *deja vu*. For it parallels a well-known thesis about the reference of names; according to which they get to refer to a unique individual because that individual uniquely satisfies the descriptive information somehow associated with a name. So if Plato is the greatest philosopher of antiquity, then by associating the description “the greatest philosopher of antiquity” with the name “Plato” one can use that name to refer to Plato.

This quite natural and appealing thesis was decisively refuted by Saul Kripke in his lectures *Naming and Necessity*.² Kripke’s observations were as follows. First, for many names that refer there is no uniquely identifying descriptive content known to the user of the name. Second, it is often the case that the associated descriptive content happens to be false of the bearer of the name. Third, even when the associated descriptive content is true of the bearer of the name, it is often only contingently true of the bearer of the name, and so cannot be the basis of our referring to the bearer of the name in possible situations in which the descriptive content does not hold of the bearer of the name. So we can entertain the true thought that Plato might not have pursued philosophy. Therefore it cannot be that the content of the name “Plato” as it appears in that thought is given by the description “the greatest philosopher of antiquity” (*modulo* considerations of the scope of the description.) For in the envisaged possibility the description would pick out Aristotle, and not Plato.

These arguments against the usefulness of descriptive content in determining the reference of conventional representations like names can be adapted to apply to the thesis that a natural representation, understood as carrying descriptive content, is about the item in the world which satisfies the descriptive content. The descriptive content

² See Saul A. Kripke’s *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), a transcript of lectures given in 1972.

may be false of the item represented, it may fall far short of distinguishing the item represented from similar items, and the representation may continue to represent the item even in circumstances in which the item is counterfactually supposed not to satisfy the descriptive content. We shall, however, have to wait a little while to see just why these adaptations of Kripke's arguments work.

Kripke's own arguments against the usefulness of descriptive content in determining the reference of names pushed several philosophers back to the claim the crucial condition for a name being about a given individual was the holding of the right causal connection between the utterance of a name on a given occasion and some original baptism in which the name was attached to the bearer. In effect, they took this to be the lesson of *Naming and Necessity*.³ But this looks like a confusion between the linguistic genealogy of the use of a name, and something that could ground reference to an item.

Causation is in itself too promiscuous a relation to make for any natural connection between a present use of a specific name and an original "baptism" of some item with that name. Consider two uses of the name "Gavrilo Princip"; the one by his mother in response to the question "What is your son's name?" thereby identifying him to the Bosnian police who were seeking the assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the other by a contemporary high school student who has gleaned the name from the Internet, and first misspelled it badly, only then to fall into the correct spelling, and so write the name "Gavrilo Princip." Are we seriously to suppose that there is some common causal connection which holds between each of the two uses or *tokenings* of the name "Gavrilo Princip" and the event of the naming of the man Gavrilo Princip, a connection whose holding *makes it the case* that each tokening of the name refers to the man?

As Kripke himself observed, there may be a chain of mental acts, *each with their own unreduced intentional content*, leading back to the relevant original naming or "baptism," so that with every new use of the name, the speaker at least intends to refer to the same person as was referred to by those from which he first learnt the name. (Maybe; but Gavrilo's mother would be rather strange if she had *that* intention. She presumably simply intended to refer to her son.) Even so, there is no reason to think that underlying such chains of referential intentions

³ See, in particular, Dennis Stamp "Towards a Causal Theory of Linguistic Representation" *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 2, 1977; Hartry Field "Mental Representation" *Erekenntnis*, 13, 1978; Michael Devitt *Designation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Fred Dretske *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

there is any interesting or distinctive causal pattern which would itself *ground* reference.

“A Relevant Pattern of Causal Connection”

Well, if it is not satisfaction of descriptive content which makes for the crucial connection between a representation and what it represents, then what could it possibly be, if not some relevant pattern of causal connection there in the world?

“Some relevant pattern of causal connection” is a mantra of misbegotten hopefulness, and for two reasons. First, suppose that sometime in the next decade, we actually found it. It would be a highly abstract pattern that could hold not only between thoughts supposedly involving a mental representation of Plato and the philosopher Plato, and also between thoughts supposedly involving a mental representation of Gavrilo Princip and the assassin Gavrilo Princip. Now consider some variant on that pattern, and ask: What is it about the first causal pattern and not its variant, which, as it were, makes the lights of intentionality go on; that is, makes it the case that certain inner states of individuals are intentionally directed towards items in the environment? How does figuring at different ends of one kind of complex causal web make for intentionality, while similarly figuring in different but equally complex causal webs leaves the world devoid of intentionality? That is a pressing question because what is on offer is supposed to be a reduction of intentionality, and such a reduction ought to make it clear why such a phenomenon, which has a certain natural unity, should depend for its existence on this or that tweaking of detailed causal connections.

Second, the very idea of causation breaks into three parts. Consider the event which is the tokening in some brain of some putative representation. There is, first of all, the notion of the total cause of that event. The total cause of any given event is an objective feature of the event, and could be identified with the whole event structure in the past light cone of the given event. Then there is the notion of what might be called the in-itself-sufficient producer of the event, that is the subpart of the past light cone which is such that if it were duplicated then an event of exactly the same sort would be produced. Then there is the notion of *a* notable cause of the event, a notion on which my neglecting my plants caused their withering, while Queen Elizabeth’s neglecting them did not. This is a notion inherently connected with our interest in practices of explaining, predicting and preventing events; practices which lead us to focus on small parts of the event structure in a past light cone which are salient to us, and which are of a kind with events we might imagine manipulating to produce, or prevent, similar

effects in the future. Accordingly, the notion of *a* notable cause is an anthropocentric notion in the way that the notions of the total cause or the sufficient producer of an event are not.

Return now to the respective thoughts about Gavriilo Princip had by his mother and the high school student who came across him on the internet. Gavriilo does not exhaust the past light cones of those thoughts. He is not an in-itself-sufficient producer of those thoughts. At most, Gavriilo figures as *a* notable cause of each thought. This suggests that in the proposed reductive accounts of intentionality by way of causation, the ordinary notion of *a* notable cause must be invoked. But it seems paradoxical that a rather gerrymandered relation of being a notable cause, a relation that is only salient to us because of our practices of explanation, prediction and prevention, should be the crucial relation to be appealed to in the reduction of intentionality. Intentionality, and this is particularly obvious when it comes to perceptual intentionality, is a phenomenon with a certain natural unity; we do not seem to be properly explicating that unity by appealing to an anthropocentric notion like being a notable cause. Intentionality is a relation whose adequate demarcation is *less* anthropocentric than that of being a notable cause. It would then be very surprising if intentionality can be reduced to the relation of notable causation plus whatever else.

It should go without saying that this is not to in any way to deny that we are caused by external objects to go into intentional states directed towards them. That is a manifest fact, which in no way implies that intentionality can be reduced to causation plus something else.

It is worth recalling a final embarrassment for the thesis that it is by way of a distinguished pattern of causation that representations get to be about what they are about. We often think about abstract entities, items not located in the causal network, items that are not causes of anything; either our thinking of them is not representing them to ourselves, or causation is not a necessary condition for representation.

Another Point Against the Representationalist Tradition

A short summary of the last thirty years of work on reducing intentionality might be put this way. If we take *aboutness* to be a relation holding contingently between a (re)presentation and an item it is supposedly about then we do not find any good account of what that relation is. It is not the relation of satisfying an individuating descriptive content, and it is not any of the three canvassed relations of causation. And the favorable mix of description and causation seems to have eluded us. That is where we now are in the metaphysics of content.

In a way, we should have suspected this all along, particularly if we had taken to heart the idea that the connection between a state that makes something present and what it makes present is not an accidental feature of that state, but enters into the essence of that state, partly defining what it is to be that state.

Of course, even with all that said, there is nothing wrong with using the idiom or analogy of representation in an empirical sub-personal psychology, say in order to mark steps of information processing in the brain and nervous system.⁴ In such a sub-personal psychology, “representing that P” means carrying the information or the misinformation that P. This is the sense in which the rings in a tree trunk might represent the age of the tree. They are traces from which the age of the tree can be recovered. And perhaps, as the work of Ruth Millikan and others suggests,⁵ in explicating this relation of carrying information it is helpful to resort to the idea of evolved proper functioning in order to allow that a tree that does not grow *properly* can leave misleading traces as to its age, so that its rings can carry *misinformation* about its age.

That is perfectly all right as it stands; but the thing to see is how little this sort of representation (namely bearing a trace from which information or misinformation can be recovered) is like the *presentational* nature of our mental states.

Recall our earlier remarks about perception. When one sees one’s dogs running in the front yard, one is not simply getting into an information bearing-state from which in it possible to recover the fact that one’s dogs are running in the front yard. Instead, the whole content of the perceptual experience is of the dogs and their running being present to in a certain way. In thus presenting, the dogs are “closer” than any mere cause of one’s inner information-bearing states could be. THERE they are, immediately available as objects of demonstration, and as topics of one’s further thought and talk. What does the philosophy of mental representation make of this immediate *availability*, the flood of new topics of thought and talk that comes upon us every time we open our ears and eyes?

⁴ Several theorists have been careful to make the distinction between a naturalistic reduction of intentionality by way of “representations” and the status of the idea of representational content in cognitive science. See Robert Cummings *Meaning and Mental Representation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); Stephen Stich “What Is a Theory of Mental Representation” *Mind*, 101, 1992; and Michael Tye “Naturalism and The Mental” *Mind*, 101, 1992.

⁵ See Ruth Millikan *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984) and “In Defense of Proper Functions” *Philosophy of Science*, 56, 1989.

I recall driving along a road through the forest on the way to Yosemite; on the stereo Glen Gould was mangling the French Suites in his typically riveting way. On the long trip, I saw thousands of trees and heard thousands of notes. They flashed by, yet each was presented to me as distinct from the other. The whole phenomenology of the experience had a certain “donatory” aspect, in that the individual trees and the notes were just given to me without any attentive effort on my part.

There is no doubt that this was because of the operation of my visual and auditory system. But there are two ways of understanding this undeniable fact. On the first, thanks to that operation, (which, by the way, we might well describe and model in information-processing terms) the trees and the notes became present, i.e. a host of modes of presentation of the trees and the notes were accessed, and thus made up the content of my conscious life during the trip. That is why each tree and note was available to me as a potential object of attention, demonstration and thought.

There is a second, Representationalist, way of understanding the undeniable fact that the trees and the notes were made available by the operation of my visual and auditory systems. The Representationalist would say that the trees and the notes were made available to me at the level of conscious awareness because a host of individual representations of those trees and notes were *produced* in my sensory system. For each tree and each note, my sensory representational system had already formed some representational designatum which then made the tree or the note *available* in this way.

Now the crucial question: How does such an appeal to representations in any way *explain* the availability of the tree and the notes? The Representationalist analogies with rings in a tree or with beavers signaling with their tails involve nothing like availability. Availability simply does not figure in the Representationalist Theory of Mind; unless, that is, we help ourselves to the “homuncularist” dead-end encouraged by the *camera obscura*, the idea of perception as involving a subject contemplating his own representations. This is obviously a dead end because it rests everything on the *availability to a subject of his own representations*, a primary intentional attitude of just the sort which the Representationalist is trying to reduce. And now, once again, whatever favorable mix of description, causation and proper function we invoke, the availability of the representation, and thus of the items it represents, will not be accounted for.

This shows that when it comes to availability the resort to representations does no work; we can either say that thanks to the operation of our sensory systems items in the environment are made available, or

we can say that thanks to the operation of our sensory systems there come to be representations which make items in the environment available. The first is a fact, and the second is a pseudo-explanation; for the idiom of representation does not in any way illuminate perceptual availability, the way in which the objects of perception are THERE, and so able to be demonstrated and taken as new topics of thought and talk.

A Diagnosis of the Mistake

That point about perception, the way it makes its objects available for demonstration, thought and talk, along with the failure over the past thirty years to find the favorable mix of description, causation and proper function that makes for *aboutness*, might prompt us to take a different tack. The problematic assumption in the philosophical treatment of intentionality is that the basic form of intentionality has the structure of a mental representation *contingently related*, be it by causation or individuating description or whatever, to an item represented. Since it is of the nature of mental representations to contingently relate to items in the environment, we need to find some non-Representationalist way of conceiving of intentionality.

In order to take a different tack, we might begin by adapting Gottlob Frege's terminology, and speak of "modes of presentation" making up our mental acts of experiencing, believing, and thinking.⁶ We should not think of these acts as the generation of representations which somehow carry or encode modes of presentation; instead we are to think of their whole intellectual and sensory content as given by the constitutive modes in which their targets or topics present.

Next, we are to think of these modes of presentation as objective (if sometimes relational) features of the things themselves. This is the idea that each item that could be a topic of thought and talk has associated with it a host of standing ways, or manners, or modes, of presenting.

A so-called "subjective" mental act is then to be thought of as an act of accessing a mode of presentation of the items that act is about, and the whole experienced character of the mental act is determined by that accessed mode of presentation, not by the character of some experienced representation.

Finally, and crucially, we must drop Frege's (somewhat throwaway) suggestion that we understand modes of presentation as something like individuating descriptions; i.e. as things which need not be essentially related to the items they do in fact pick out. Instead, we should

⁶ See "The Thought" in M. Beaney, *The Frege Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

understand a mode of presentation of an item as individuated partly by the item presented! So for example, a mode of presentation of the dog Jasper is *Jasper-presenting-in-a-certain-way*.

Given that, we can see why counterparts of Kripke's results in *Naming and Necessity* hold against the view that individuating descriptive content determines what a natural representation is about. Those results and their counterparts are exactly what one should expect if modes of presentation are partly individuated by what they present. So conceived, modes of presentation might well not carry uniquely identifying descriptive material about the items they present. Indeed, they may even be false of the items they present, as in the case of illusion. Even in the case of illusion, the object of the illusion is *presented* by way of an illusory mode of presentation. That is why one can come to secure one's first demonstrative reference to an item on the basis of an illusory presentation of the item. As when, hiking through the hills, your friend points to a dot on a far hillside, something that turns out to be a camper's hut. Seeing the dot, you can ask "Is *that* the hut we have been looking for?" The hut is presented, despite the fact that it is not a dot; that is, despite the descriptive falsity or illusory character of the presentation. The whole content of the illusory experience is the hut presenting as "a dot" on the distant hillside. Because it is the hut presenting in that way the hut is **THERE**, available for demonstration, thought and talk.

Here then is the parting of the ways with Frege, who otherwise is our model for thinking of objective modes of presentation. It is misleading to say, as Frege does, that a mode of presentation *determines* a referent; a mode of presentation *is just* a referent, some item or other in the world, presenting in a certain manner. The mode or manner of presentation no more determines a referent than your last flu inoculation determines you. Just as that inoculation was partly individuated in terms of it being *yours*, a mode of presentation is partly individuated in terms of the very item it presents.

Consider, by analogy, an object that can only be picked up in certain ways by beings with hands like ours. The object, because of its shape and size, itself determines a number of adequate manners of lifting it. For example, if it is a large log, then because of its size and shape, one manner of lifting it will be by using two arms cupped underneath at a sufficient distance to balance the log. These manners of lifting the log can certainly be generalized, and applied to other logs of similar sorts, but in the first instance they are simply further relational features of the very log in question. As well the log's size and shape, there are just *these* ways of lifting the log. Other ways of engaging with the log are just not *ways of lifting the log*. There is no sensible question

as to what further relation is such that its holding between the log and a certain manner of lifting, makes that manner of lifting a manner of lifting *that very log*. The log partly individuates the various manners of lifting it. The manners and the log are not related merely accidentally, the log partly individuates any manner of lifting *it*. (Notice, by the way, how odd it would be to explain the relation between the log and manners of lifting it by appealing to intermediate representations that are somehow *about* the log. But again, this is not to pre-empt the question of whether in the empirical psychology of action it is useful to model our motor system as an information processing system. The way to apply such a model would then be as an account of how we are able to do such things as lift logs, i.e. *implement* certain ways of lifting logs.)

From this point of view, the tradition went wrong in treating modes of presentation as not essentially related to what they make present; so that there was then a gap to be filled, either by description or causation, a gap between some mental representation and the worldly items which that mental item makes present. But modes of presentation are not mental; they are objective, in that they come with the objects themselves as the very features of those objects that make them available for demonstration, thought and talk. And they are individuated by the objects they present.

Among the objects which come with their respective modes of presentation are abstract objects; so there is no *special* problem produced by reference to abstract objects, as there was in the Representationalist tradition.

A Transformed Picture of Consciousness and Reality

Our occurrent mental acts, our experiences and our thoughts, are occasions of accessing objective modes of presentation of items. So our mental lives are filled with objective features of external items, namely their modes of presentation. But we get nowhere near exhausting the modes of presentation that there are. For example, there is a way things look to a being like you from three feet North East from here now, even if no one is ever occupying that perceptual standpoint. You could have accessed that way of looking if you had occupied that position; but your accessing this objective, if relational, mode of presentation would make no difference to its character or to what it presents.

The transformed picture of reality associated with this idea can be brought out very simply. When you close your eyes, the objects before you are still looking the way they just did; more generally, without you on the scene they would still present in the whole variety of ways in

which they now present to you. Furthermore, if that is not eerie enough, given that there are animals or conscious minds with sensibilities unlike ours, the objects before you now present in a host of ways which you could never access. (For we should also think of these other animals as also sampling presence, in their respective idiosyncratic ways.) The specificity of your sensibility, the detailed structure of your sensory and cognitive apparatus, in effect blinkers you to all but a very narrow range of modes of presentation of the items before you. You do not produce presence; you only selectively access it in your mental acts. What you call the contents of your mind are out there already.

Presence is therefore not a subjective phenomenon. As we shall see, properly understood, there are no subjective phenomena. There is a host of events that fill our so-called “subjective” mental lives. These events are occurrent mental acts, which are objective psychological occurrences. Their contents are objective modes of presentation. These modes of presentation are standing properties of the objects themselves. It is because they have these standing properties anyway that the objects themselves are intelligible to the intellect, and available to be sensed in a variety of ways.

On this view our respective mental lives are just particular idiosyncratic histories of *accessing* objective modes of presentation. What we accessed were objects presenting in this or that way; our mental lives are parasitic on this ubiquitous fact of presentation. We are not Producers of Presence; that is, we are not beings whose psychological operations are the preconditions of presence. The whole content of our minds is the contribution of the objects. When we speak of consciousness, we are systematically getting hold of the wrong end of the stick; the basic reality is not the fact of consciousness, understood as the inner achievement of a mind. It is the fact of the on-going and multifaceted disclosure of objects, which certain evolved animals are able to access.

Is Anti-Reductionism the Real Problem?

Does the radical anti-reductionism of the view under discussion mean that it should be rejected? Must we *reduce* intentionality in order to be properly naturalistic; that is, in order to have the proper respect for the sciences of nature and their ambition to a certain kind of causal completeness in their description of the world?

It is Jerry Fodor who has been most focused and forthright on the reduction of intentionality. And it is to him that we owe the most ingenious and developed suggestions of how the reduction might go. To the heap of objections offered against his suggestions, I would only add the observation that even if his Representationalist account of

intentionality was able to overcome all extant objections, it would not make for mental states and events being essentially about what they are in fact about. It would not therefore properly account for the facts of presence.

In *Psychosemantics* Fodor writes:

I suppose that sooner or later the physicists will complete the catalog they have been compiling of the ultimate and irreducible properties of things. When they do, the likes of spin, charm and charge will perhaps appear on the list. But aboutness surely won't; intentionality surely doesn't go that deep. It is hard to see in the face of these considerations how one can be a Realist about intentionality without being, to some extent, a Reductionist. If the semantic and the intentional are real properties of things, it must be in virtue of their identity with (or maybe their supervenience on?) properties that are themselves neither intentional or semantic. If aboutness is real it must really be something else.⁷

Since Fodor wrote that, we have come to realize that supervenience is much too weak a requirement for reduction; for example the present—obviously anti-reductionist—approach is fully compatible with asserting the supervenience of facts about modes of presentation on facts about the objects and their non-presentational properties. As to which modes of presentation are accessed when, that may be a highly non-accidental feature fixed by the details of brain states and other constitutors of intentional states.

Supervenience aside, Fodor's tri-lemma, "either a basic constituent of reality, or reducible to such, or unreal" is a manifestation of scientism, a charge that he himself delightfully accepts.

The charge of "scientism" is best understood as the accusation that a certain use of the scientific world picture, particularly a metaphysical use in which it is presented as an exhaustive inventory of reality, depends upon forgetting the abstractive preconditions of scientific modeling. Various domains are amenable to scientific understanding because they can be modeled by way of a precise vocabulary, often the vocabulary of mathematics. The vocabulary and the models then provide testable predictions, and experimental investigation involves a set of routines whose outcomes are typically agreed upon by the practitioners of the science in question. So a growing consensus develops as to the nature of various aspects of reality.

This is genuine progress in understanding the world, but like every other real advance, it comes at a price. The scientific method essentially

⁷ J. Fodor *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 97.

involves redescription of the phenomena, and modeling of the phenomena. In these two ways, among others, less tractable aspects of reality are rightly ignored. Scientism, the idea that the basic science, physics, will provide an exhaustive inventory of what there is, involves forgetting this strategically important ignoring. The things we abstracted away from in our mathematical descriptions and models are no less real because of their relative intractability. The idea that this selective focus will cost us nothing in our knowledge of reality; therein lies the methodological naiveté of scientism.

Scientism aside, science may properly aspire to a certain kind of causal completeness in its modeling of reality. The scientific ambition of modeling reality in a way that is causally complete and self-contained can be explained in different ways. The ambition might be understood as the attempt to find both a vocabulary which subsumes all events, and a set of natural laws cast in that vocabulary, so that all causation between events can be seen to be natural rather than supernatural, i.e. to follow from the laws and antecedent conditions.

Perhaps reduction of all sciences to a basic science like physics by way of bridging laws or property identifications holding between the sciences is no longer a viable hope. But there remains the appealing aspiration to find a precise and sufficiently general vocabulary in which any event or change can in principle be described, and described in such a way that it can then be brought under the aegis of the “laws of nature.” That idea is easier to explain if we think of such laws as captured by statements with the logical form of universal generalizations that connect antecedent event-types with consequent event-types with a given probability. Then any event, under its respective privileged description, will be expected to flow with a certain probability from previous events, as a matter of natural law. So if one event is found to immediately cause another, then, given re-descriptions of the events in the privileged vocabulary, there will be a sort of derivation of that singular causal connection from statements of law.

That is, anyway, how Donald Davidson expressed the idea that a basic science might provide a causally complete model of reality. Davidson called this expression of the idea “the nomological character of causation.”⁸ He regarded the nomological (or law-governed) character of causation to be a matter of actual fact rather than the expression of a sound methodological principle to the effect that we should look for the laws and the privileged descriptions. Even so, there is something to be said for Davidson’s transition from the methodological principle

⁸ See “Causal Relations” and “The Material Mind” in Davidson’s *Essays on Action and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

to the corresponding metaphysical hypothesis, namely the widespread explanatory and predictive success that comes from following the principle.

Davidson supposed that the privileged universal vocabulary was that of some future extension of modern physics. Perhaps this is a good way to give content to the idea that physics is the *basic* science of nature. Yet, once that status is granted to physics, the idea of re-describing all activities, achievements and accomplishments in the vocabulary of physics begins to seem a trifle bizarre. For activities, achievements and accomplishments have their own manifest form, which it is precisely the business of physics to abstract away from in the name of providing clear quantitative models of the underlying transactions involved. No one should think that an ordinary description of the neighbor's wedding and a mathematical description of the trajectories of the fundamental particles involved in the events of the wedding are descriptions of the very same activity, namely the wedding. The physical events subsumed under the basic physical laws are thus better seen as the *ultimate material constituents* of the activities, achievements, and accomplishments whose forms physics has no business rehearsing.

So, Davidson's expression of the potential causal completeness of a scientific model of reality might be modified as follows. Every event will admit of a description of its *ultimate material constituents* in a vocabulary which allows those constituents to be brought under the aegis of natural laws. If that is so, there is a clear sense in which our world is closed under purely natural causation; that is, the causal potential of each type of event is always and everywhere a matter of the laws of nature.

How exactly is the thesis of the causal completeness of physics threatened by an anti-reductionism about intentionality of the sort broached here?

Confirming the Outrageous Hypothesis

Even without our minds, the objects would still be presenting in all the ways they do. (The world would only be devoid of our mental acts, and the modes of presentation that would present those acts in further acts of reflective consciousness.) To be sure, given our Representationalist *Weltanschauung* the idea of presence without anyone accessing presence is so surprising as to be almost unintelligible; for we are like the members of a borrowing library who narcissistically suppose that their acts of borrowing *create* the books they borrow. We take ourselves to be Producers of Presence; that is, we take presence to be dependent on our mental operations.

Here is a way of providing empirical confirmation of the hypothesis that presence is not mind-dependent. Stare at something in your immediate field of vision. Attend to how that thing looks. Now without moving your head in any direction, just close your eyes, and consider the hypothesis that it still looks *THAT* way, the very way it looked when you had your eyes open. You can confirm this hypothesis by *now opening your eyes*. Associated with this confirmation may be a certain metaphysical gestalt shift in which we experience our minds as “out there already.”

Of course, those philosophers who suppose that a thing’s looking a certain way is nothing other than our enjoying a representation of it, will treat our little performance as an example of the “refrigerator light” fallacy. You open the refrigerator door, the light is on. You close it, and hypothesize that the light is still on when the refrigerator door is closed. You then confirm that the light is still on by opening the door again. In this case, they will say, you have confirmed no such thing, for there is a mechanism built into the refrigerator which turns off the light when the door is closed.

But actually, upon reflection, it is hard to see why there need be any *fallacy* in the refrigerator light inference. (It is an inductive inference, and not every inductive inference with a true premise and a false conclusion is an inductive fallacy.) Suppose there were no such special mechanism that turns off the light when the refrigerator door is closed and back on when it is opening, then surely my opening the door and closing it and opening it again and seeing the light again, would be good evidence that the light is continuously on. It would be just like checking twice to see that paint on your car is dry. This is a way of confirming the hypothesis that the paint is dry. The difference in the refrigerator light case is just that, as things stand now, our total evidence about actual refrigerators ought to include knowledge of a special mechanism that turns the light off and on.

Compare the situation with our little performance. Those philosophers who believe that an object’s looking a certain way is nothing other than our enjoying a mental representation of that object, are thereby proposing a mechanism that, as it were, turns the mental lights off and on. When you were staring at the object before you, it was present because you were enjoying a mental representation of it. When you closed your eyes, it was not present because you were not enjoying a mental representation of it. When you opened your eyes, it became present again because once again you were enjoying a mental representation of it. Given the mechanism, the inference we made in our little performance was just like the naïve inference that the refrigerator light is continuously on.

The only problem is that we have quite good reasons to believe that the proposed mechanism is *not* operating. Those reasons are the very ones we were illustrating by quickly rehearsing the failure of thirty years of dedicated philosophical work, the failure to give anything like a satisfactory account of how a mental representation could be *of* or *about* anything in the external world, at least in the way that a perception of something is *of* or *about* that thing, a way that makes what it is about available for further demonstration, thought and talk. Having a mental representation caused by an object which the representation “resembles” is nothing like having that object present in the way that objects are present in perceptual experience. As for causation, similarity and proper function, there seems to be no favorable mix of these external relations which would make objects available in the way they are in perception.

In the absence of this proposed mechanism of representation, our little performance should be understood as more like checking twice to see that the paint job on one’s car has dried. This performance provides very good evidence that the painted surface of the car continues to have the relevant property of being dry *unperceived*, and so even when it is not being touched. So also, our little performance provides very good evidence of the continued presence, *unperceived*, of the object to which you were attending. Try it a few times, and see if you can’t get the feeling that your mind is “out there already.”

So here, again, is the neglected hypothesis, hopefully by now more vividly in view. We are not Producers of Presence; it is not that our mental acts make things present. We are Samplers of Presence; our mental acts are samplings from a vast realm of objective manners of presentation. It is of the nature of existents to present, in all the various ways in which they can be grasped in this or that mental act of this or that individual mind. The modes of presentation are all there on the side of the things themselves. Those modes of presentation are just the things presenting in this or that way. They provide the whole content of our mental acts.

Of course, some of these mental acts, in their turn, are only presented to me, and some are only presented to you. So we have my thoughts and experiences, and your thoughts and experiences. But properly understood, this is not a subjective phenomenon either. I see my dogs running in the front yard. Here I access modes of presentation of my dogs. Those modes of presentation are as objective as the dogs themselves. (You could have accessed the same or similar modes of presentation of my dogs running, if you had been situated in my viewing position.) Now consider the mental act of my seeing my dogs running in the front yard, something present to me and not to you.

Only I am in a position to have reflective awareness of this act, and to remember it later on. But this looks like a contingent fact, no doubt a rock-solid one, having something to do with the causal isolation of our respective brain processes.

We can imagine cases in which another comes to be directly aware of some of my mental acts, and cases in which another seems to remember my experiences “from the inside” as it were. When it comes to memory, the Branch Line Variant on Teletransportation is such a case. Here the familiar Teletransporter misfires, and does not destroy the original brain and body, even though it produces a duplicate brain and body at the receiving station. The person who walks out of the receiving station is arguably not the same person as the one who still remains at the transmitting station; yet he has direct access via memory to that person’s past experiences.

What Are Our Mental Lives, if Not Subjective?

Our hypothesis has it that our respective mental lives are just particular idiosyncratic histories of *accessing* modes of presentation. What we accessed were objects presenting in this or that way; our mental lives are parasitic on this ubiquitous fact of presentation. We are not Producers of Presence; that is, we are not beings whose psychological operations are the absolute preconditions of presence. Everything that fills our minds, the whole content of our minds, is the contribution of the objects. When we speak of consciousness, we are systematically getting hold of the wrong end of the stick, the basic reality is not the fact of consciousness, understood as the inner achievement of a mind. It is a fact of the continuous and multifaceted disclosure of objects, which certain evolved animals are able to access.

If there is nothing subjective, or mind-dependent about presence then there is no danger of death, even the death of the last sentient being, securing the end of presence. At most, the danger is that certain evolved animals will cease to access presence. How things appear, how they present, all this would remain completely the same, down to the last detail.

Could the Structure of Presence Impose Evolutionary Constraints?

Given our hypothesis, it is natural to go on to suppose that the vast totality of modes of presentation has some significant structure, and may indeed exhibit a limited variety of *types* of modes of presentation. This would represent an antecedent limit on the types of evolvable systems of cognition, memory and perception. There are only certain directions in which biological systems can evolve in order to be able

to access one or another of the limited variety of types of modes of presentation, and so take advantage of one or another type of consciousness.

In this way, an independent structure of the objective realm of presence or disclosure could itself impose constraints on what would be a viable form of conscious bodily life.

For example, consider the modes of presentations of ostensible features of the surfaces of things, in particular of those qualities which are the colors. We know that birds have a much more sophisticated visual system than we do, at least in the sense of having a fourth set of cones compared to our three, so that the phenomenology of their color experience must be very different from ours. So we might be led to speak of the birds' colors and our colors, and think of surfaces as objectively presenting in both ways.

However, since attention to a range of qualities like the colors presented by objects is among the most salient way of making out distinctions between objects, and of tracing them, and of detecting the chemical differences that in part map the difference between the edible and the inedible, we can think of both humans and birds in the evolutionary development of their visual systems as having been under a quite general objective constraint; in effect a selective pressure, imposed as it were from the side of the realm of manners of presentation. Expressed as a command this selective pressure would come to this: Other things being equal, develop in such a way that you can access a range of color-like qualitative manners of presentation of objects, so as to be better able to distinguish objects, trace them, and make out useful differences like friend and foe, and edible and inedible.

In this way, the antecedent objective structure of modes of presentation can impose a variety of fates, promising and unpromising, on any developing form of conscious life. If that is so then the selective environment in which evolution operates has been massively and systematically under-described; it is not just the physical structure of the environment, it includes the antecedent structure of the limited variety of modes of presentation that can in principle be accessed by the variety of conscious lives that might get going in that environment.

This point, that selective pressures are not just imposed by the physical environment, but by the antecedent structure of modes of presentation of the items that make up the environment, applies *a fortiori* to the development of intellectual life. There may be a limited variety of ways of thinking about things, so that an animal that begins to develop rudimentary thought, and thereby derives some selective advantage, may have had to develop physically in such a way as to be able to access one or another of these ways of thinking about things. In this

way, the antecedent structure of the realm of presence can partly impose a variety of fates, promising and unpromising, on any developing form of intellectual life.

In this way, Objective Mind, i.e. the totality of objective modes of presentation, *could* set limits on which forms of individual mental life will be viable; so it is at least in principle possible, compatible with the causal completeness of the physical description of every transaction in the world, that what takes place in the development of mind is partly ordained by the independent structure of presence; that is, by Objective Mind.

One homely version of this, no doubt *outré*, suggestion might be already accepted by those mathematical realists who suppose that the numbers constitute an objective realm, with its own structure there to be grasped. Without supposing that the numbers themselves could have any causal efficacy, the objective structure of mathematical reality will impose a variety of fates, promising and unpromising, on any living thing that is becoming numerate. You either correctly map parts of this realm in your thought or your incipient attempts at quantitative reasoning will make grave trouble for you. That “demand” presumably has been a selective pressure in our actual evolutionary development.

But now simply generalize from the antecedent structure of mathematical reality to the antecedent structure of presence. This structure too may impose its selective pressures. And in this way, Objective Mind may determine what forms of mental life are viable, and do this without exercising any causal influence on material processes.

In Objective Mind, i.e. the objective structure of modes of presentation, there are hosts of illusory, inadequate, and incomplete modes of presentation. It presumably must be so given the evolutionary history of particular minds, since evolution is gradual and practical adaptation, and the ability to access of some primitive modes of thinking of things, and correspondingly limited modes of experiencing things, will still confer a selective advantage on animals even if those modes of presentation are not fully accurate presentations. Still, there does seem to be some further competitive advantage conferred by shedding illusion and clarifying our thoughts into an increasingly integrated explanatory structure. The resulting, more accurate forms of understanding will exploit more and more adequate and complete modes of presentation.

A comparison with the evolutionary significance of increasing co-operation may be helpful here. It is not that the principles of co-operation and kin altruism could have any *causal* influence on evolution and natural selection. It is just that, as a matter of fact, animals that are

prepared to co-operate with their kin, and to some extent sacrifice their interests for their kin, confer a collective advantage on their kin; and so, to that extent, co-operative and kin-altruistic animals are likely to become more numerous in evolutionary history. The same holds for animals with mental capacities which enable them to grasp more adequate and complete modes of presentation.

Is This Madness?

You will say "All this is Madness!" For presence, you will say, is fundamentally presence to something, a self or subject of experience, the essential *third term* of any mental act. For every mental act, you will say, involves *an object* presenting in a certain way *to a subject*. Therefore in the absence of a divine subjectivity, the end of conscious life is the end of presence. The idea of objective presence is thus a contradiction in terms.

Is presence fundamentally presence to something, a self or subject of experience, an essential *third term* of any mental act, besides the object of the act and the manner of presentation of the object? Does every mental act involve *an object* presenting in a certain way *to a subject*?

Try as I might, I just do not find the third term of my mental acts. I do find objects presenting in this or that way, and in the perceptual case these manners or modes of presentation have an interesting property: they are perspectival. That is, they disclose how objects appear from a particular point in space. From here, I am able to access how my laptop looks from here, how the keys feel to a touch like mine, and how this body now feels against the chair. These modes of presentation converge on the position occupied by the human being with whom I am so terribly familiar. I find him, that is Johnston, here at this position, but I do not find a self or a subject of experience, here. In this respect I seem to resemble David Hume, who famously wrote:

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. To attempt a farther proof of this were to weaken its evidence; since no proof can be deriv'd from any fact, of which we are so intimately conscious; nor is there any thing, of which we can be certain, if we doubt of this.

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or

cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception.... If any one, upon serious and unprejudic'd reflection thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls *himself*; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me.

Of course, I do not deny that these mental acts that I am pleased to call mine have a certain impressive feature when considered collectively. They cohere, they are integrated, they follow one from another, and most importantly they are available to be made the topics of higher-order reflective acts, which would in their turn also be integrated into the flow of my mental acts. Thanks to this integration, and availability for further reflection, certain mental acts, as it turns out precisely those that depend for their occurrence on the functioning of Johnston's brain; feel cosy, familiar, MINE. Those mental acts being MINE; that fact just seems to consist in their sharing this property of integration and availability for reflection.

“Mineness” Is Not Subjective Either

The felt “mineness” of my mental acts is not the awareness of a common intrinsic constituent of those acts, as it were the self or ego at the subject pole. It is a feeling of fit; a sense that these present mental acts cohere with a dominant stream of mental life. This feeling of fit is a grace of fortune, secured by the functioning of my brain. The feeling of fit involves a certain mode of presentation of my mental acts taken collectively.

We now know that the feeling of fit can break down even though thought and experience continues. This happens, for example, in Cotard's syndrome, where the patient's very sense of self breaks down. Patients with Cotard's syndrome just come right out and honestly deny that they exist. When you try to explain *Cogito ergo sum* to them, they either dismiss it as a mere trick or they deny that there is anyone thinking their thoughts or speaking their words. Patient's with Cotard's syndrome have been known to turn up unannounced at funeral parlors, asking to be buried.⁹

⁹ See J. Pearn and C. Gardner Thorpe, “Jules Cotard (1840-1889) His life and the unique syndrome which bears his name” *Neurology*, 58, 2002. Also A.W. Young, A.W. and K. M. Leafhead, “Betwixt Life and Death: Case Studies of the Cotard Delusion” in P. W. Halligan and J. C. Marshall (eds.) *Method in Madness: Case Studies in Cognitive Neuropsychiatry* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1996).

What is wrong with a victim of Cotard's is not that he can no longer find in introspection a persisting self at the subject pole of each of his mental acts. Hume could not find such a thing, but he did not have Cotard's syndrome; Hume was not denying that he existed or asking that he be buried because he no longer existed. The mental acts of a victim of Cotard's syndrome are not integrated, and smoothly available for further reflection. There is no longer the kind of experiential fit that makes for the sensed "mineness" of experience.

So the fact of certain mental acts being mine does not appear to consist in those mental acts sharing a common third term, a self or subject of experience which is most fundamentally ME. That, I believe, is the sort of discovery that Hume is reporting in his famous account of the deliverances of his introspective acts. Experiences, and mental acts quite generally, come in integrated bundles, and are available to be topics of higher-order mental acts, which if they occurred would likewise be integrated into a larger more inclusive bundle. But these mental acts are not owned by a subject or self. There is no third term in the structure of the mental act. There is just the objects presenting, and a mental act is an occurrence in which part of that objective phenomenon is accessed, thanks to the operations of the brain and nervous system of some animal or human being.

Certain mental acts are mine in the purely indexical sense, they are the mental acts associated with the human being who is making this utterance. But that is not to say that they are owned by a self that is most fundamentally ME. Here we find no deep subjectivity to be added to the world of objects and their objective modes of presentation.

The Self as Dreamt by the Objects

The idea of a self or subject as the third term of a mental act in which some object is presented in a certain mode or manner is itself encouraged by the relational nature of bodily-sensory and perceptual modes of presentation and their convergence at particular bodies.

As noted, the modes of presentation of the items in my perceptual field are *perspectival*; that is, they present items to a particular viewing position, or more generally to a particular point from which someone might *sense* the surrounding environment. The implied position at which those modes of presentation seem to converge is the position of my head and body. To that same implied position, a bodily field, as it were a three-dimensional volume of bodily sensation, also presents. And that implied position is also one from which certain acts, presented as willed, emanate. Furthermore, it is the position where mental

acts seem available for higher-order awareness. This whole centered pattern of presence, existing at a particular time, and perhaps over time, I call *an arena of presence and action*. There is one such arena HERE, and I assume you can truly make a corresponding remark about your own case. Now in THIS arena of presence and action there is a phenomenological center, the implied position to which external items and certain mental acts present. Again, I assume, it is like this in your own case as well. Each one of us finds him or herself at the center of an arena of presence and action.

If the implied position to which items in your visual field presents radically came apart from the implied position to which your bodily field presents and apart from the apparent center from which actions presented as willed emanate, then your very sense of self would be fragmented.¹⁰

Being at the center of THIS arena of presence and action is BEING ME in the most intimate and important sense. It is because Johnston is at the center of this arena of presence and action that he *is* me. I wake up, in bed or in a chair, and there is Johnston occupying the central phenomenological position. If it had turned out that it was someone else here at the center of THIS arena of presence and action, say Mother Teresa, or Locke's Rational Parrot, or the Prince of Darkness, then I would have been that woman, or that parrot, or that fallen angel. But time after time, without exception, when I wake up, or when I come to self-consciousness out of absorption in the flow of life, it has just been Johnston HERE at the implied center. That is why he is me. It is not because there is some self which inhabits his mental life.

The implied center is just a virtual center, a virtual point of convergence of perspectival modes of presentation. The world is not in fact centered in this way, and there is nothing which would deserve the name of a self at the virtual center of this arena of presence and action (or as I suppose, any other arena of presence and action.) There is only a living, active body accessing modes of presentation of external objects and modes of presentation of its own mental acts of accessing those modes of presentation.

Hallucinations as a Cure for This Madness

Illusions, hallucinations and after-images are often produced as the ultimate trump cards of subjectivity. If someone invites us to contemplate the mad hypothesis that (all the contents of) our minds are out

¹⁰ This fragmentation may be the best account of what is happening with those unfortunate patients, mentioned above, who suffer from Cotard's syndrome, the syndrome whose defining feature is the conviction that one does not exist.

there already, and all else fails, can't we bring him back to sanity by rehearsing the simple facts of illusion, hallucination and after-imagining?

Not necessarily, I am afraid, for he may have read and been persuaded by the arguments of "The Obscure Object of Hallucination."¹¹ Worse, he may have written it, and have convinced himself that while there are indeed objective qualities, and structures or arrays containing these, presented in hallucination and after-imagining, structures of qualities which explain how it could be that we could acquire novel knowledge of quality from hallucinations and after-images, there are no subjective or mind-dependent qualia presented in hallucination and after-imagining.

Feelings and Bodily Sensations

Surely pain is subjective, surely no one is going to tell us that there are unfelt pains hanging around waiting to be felt. Moreover, our whole sense of our bodies as three dimensional sources of action in the world is flush with feeling; not only with sensations like pain or nausea, but with bodily desires like sex and hunger and thirst. Surely these are subjective. Furthermore, our minds are full of psychic feelings, to use Michael Stocker's phrase for states like feeling good or feeling down, and these make up the matter of the more lively emotions that come over us. Surely these psychic feelings and emotions are subjective.

Surely, surely, surely. But all this is just an appeal to the qualitative aspect of our bodily and psychic life. The thought that the qualitative is the reliable sign of the subjective is no better here than in the case of hallucination.

Suppose there are objective qualities. Suppose for example that when we call music sad, we are not saying that the music makes us feel sad or predicting that it would make others feel sad. Suppose that our predication is taken at face value, as the direct predication of a quality that also presents in our psychic life when we feel sad. There is this quality—the best name for it is "sad", not "sadness" or "being sad" which are names of conditions or properties—and it can present in our psychic lives, and it can present as if it inhered in musical passages, or in Hebridean landscapes. Why shouldn't it, that quality sad, be among the items that present?

Or maybe the quality sad is just is a distinctive mode of presentation of the intentional objects of the states of sadness we sometimes fall into, and also a distinctive mode of presentation of certain passages of music, and certain landscapes. (I bypass the question of whether and to

¹¹ "The Obscure Object of Hallucination" *Philosophical Studies*,120, 2004; reprinted in Alex Byrne (ed.) *Disjunctivism: Touching Reality* (MIT Press, 2007).

what extent these modes of presentation are veridical; even if sad music like *Pavane for a Dead Princess* is not really sad, it does not follow that something mental is sad. That may not even be a clear idea, and it doesn't become clearer by talking of sad-prime, something like sad that can be a mental property.)

Don't Give Me Qualia!

The qualitative aspect of experience cannot be sensibly denied. What can be denied is that this is in any way due to subjective mental qualities or qualia being had by experiences. The inference to the existence of qualia is familiar: There is a qualitative way in which external things present, even though they do not have the quality in question. Hence the quality must be subjective or mental; i.e. it must really be had by mental states or events.

It is a non-sequitur. For example we can hold that the colors are qualities, and objective qualities at that, even if we provide a so-called subjectivist account according to which they never do in fact pervade surface or volumes but are only appear to do so. On this view, the colors are qualities that things only appear to have. It does not follow that they are really had by mental events like experiences. That may not even be a clear idea.

One reason why our confident and familiar talk about subjective mental qualia is entirely suspect is that, so far, we have collectively bungled the philosophy of quality. For example, the philosophy of color, and my own work is no exception here, has ignored a basic distinction, or a whole set of them, which can be illustrated by the difference between vermillion, the quality, and the property of being vermillion.¹²

There merest hint of this distinction is given by simple linguistic evidence. Someone could sensibly maintain that there are two distinct vermilion, but it is not so sensible to maintain that there are two properties of being vermillion. Even if the shade vermillion admits of two different determinate shades, there will still be only one property of being vermillion had by all the vermillion things. Furthermore, it may be surprising that vermillion is the color of my true love's hair, but there is no danger at all of the color of my true love's hair turning out to be the property of being vermillion. "(The property of) being vermillion is the color of my true love's hair." is just infelicitous.

¹² For the endemic confusion see many of the papers in Alex Byrne and David Hilbert (eds.) *Readings on Color Volume 1: The Philosophy of Color* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.)

The obvious inference is that being vermilion is not a color, vermilion is the relevant color; more generally, colors are not properties, they are qualities.

The same point emerges from reflection on the fact that some shades, or most determinate color qualities, can be had in different ways. So there are some determinate shades of red that could present either as pervading surfaces or as pervading volumes or as being the color of a radiant source. Here are three different ways of having the shades in question, but the shades in question are each one and not three things. So we must distinguish the shades from having them; and that is to distinguish the shades from properties. So, being surface purplish red is having purplish red pervade your surface, being volume purplish red is having purplish red pervade your volume. Here we have two different properties that involve different ways of relating to the very same shade. The properties that are so often referred to in the philosophy of color are built from the shades and ways of having them. But the shades themselves are not properties; they are the most determinate colors.

The shades are qualities which stand in relations of similarity and difference such as those depicted in the color solid; arguably these relations of similarity and difference along the dimensions of hue, saturation and brightness hold essentially of the shades that they hold of. We may by association talk of a certain similarity in respect of hue and brightness between the property of being vermilion and the property of being cinnabar, but that similarity is entirely due to the similarity that holds among the constituent shades of these two properties. Usually, similarity between *properties* consists in their sharing higher-order properties like being intrinsic or being essential or being relational or being monadic. In the case of the color properties talk of similarity and difference along the relevant dimensions of hue, saturation and brightness really only makes sense if is construed as a way of making comparisons between the constituent qualities. Strictly speaking, one property cannot be brighter than another. But vermilion is brighter than cinnabar. So vermilion and cinnabar are not properties; but they are colors.

A fourth consideration, and then we will leave it. There is something to the view that properties come to be objects of attention by abstraction from so-called “more concrete” states or events or states of affairs. That is, it takes a mental act that goes beyond the most primitive forms of perception to make properties objects of attention. But colors can come to be objects of attention in very primitive perceptual acts; even in after-imaging.

Again, we can hold that the colors are objective qualities, even if we provide a so-called subjectivist account according to which they never

do in fact pervade surfaces or volumes but are only appear to do so. That won't make the colors themselves subjective. The colors are objective shades presented as pervading surfaces. This could be an illusory presentation; but why should that make the colors themselves subjective items? There really is no place for the category of subjective quality.

So also, we can hold that the colors are objective qualities, even if we provide a so-called dispositionalist account of color, according to which, for example,

(The property of) being red = (the property of) being disposed to look red to standard perceivers under standard conditions.

The thing to notice is that this dispositionalist account is not an account of the quality red; it is an account of being red, or more longwindedly, of the property of being red, i.e. the property of having red as your (surface or radiant or volume) color. This simple distinction between red and being red disables two famous objections to dispositionalism.¹³

The first of these is the failure of dispositionalism to say anything distinctive about particular colors; parallel formulas are given for being red and being green, and so on; namely, things get to be those ways by being disposed to look those ways. Yet, so the objection goes, offering this parallel account fails to explicate the difference between colors like red and green, so there must be more to being red than is given by the dispositionalist equation. The objection goes by the wayside once we distinguish red and the property being defined, namely the property of being red.

For once it is recognized that in the dispositional equations the *qualities* red, green, yellow, etc. are being used to qualify ways things might look, and then *the property of having the relevant quality as your color* is being defined in terms of dispositions to produce experiential states defined in terms of the ways things look, it will be obvious that we should not have been asking that a dispositionalist equation explicate the relevant *quality* in a distinctive or differential way. The only way to grasp the distinctive difference between red and green is to have some experience of these qualities, or more exactly of their determinate shades.

The second objection to the dispositionalist equation turns on its alleged regressive character which is supposedly shown by substituting

¹³ For these objections see P. Boghossian and D. Velleman "Color As A Secondary Quality" *Mind*, XCVIII, 1989, and C. McGinn "Another Look at Color" *The Journal of Philosophy*, XCIII, 1996.

the analysans for the analysandum “being red” as it appears on the on the right hand of the dispositionalist equation. So if we substitute in we supposedly get this equation

Being red = being disposed to look disposed to look red to standard perceivers under standard conditions.

which seems false, if not absurd. But as a matter of fact, the analysandum, i.e. “being red” does not appear on the right hand side of the dispositionalist equation, all we find there is “red,” a name for a quality, not for the property being defined.

We need to overcome the endemic confusion between qualities and properties; to think of red as a property is akin to confusing the tiger (a kind) with the property of being a tiger.

The familiar thought that qualities are subjective properties of experience is thus a double mistake. First, qualities are not properties; they are either parts of qualitative modes of presentation of bodily or external conditions, or they are themselves the objects presented in certain experiences; as when a uniform stretch of color is differently tinted by the surrounding lights and so looks different in its different parts, or when we concentrate on the painful quality of an ache.

Second there is no good inference from the qualitative character of our psychic and bodily life to its subjectivity, i.e. to the conclusion that something mental has the relevant quality. Bodily sensations and psychic feelings are either the presentation of certain qualities, or they are qualitative modes of presentation of states of our bodies and nervous systems. Either way, the modes of presentation come into being with their objects, and are as objective as those objects are. And all the acts of inner experience are objective psychological events, each of which involve accessing the modes of presentation that constitute their content.

The Objectivity of Quality

Admittedly it is not very effective to accuse the friend of qualia of a non-sequitur. For he can drop the problematic argument, and simply assert his thesis that experienced qualities, which are not had by anything external, are properties of our experiences. How could one defend the opposing conviction that qualities, even those qualities which are not had by anything, exist objectively, i.e. independently of being sensed? Well, here is something that might pass for an argument.

There are certain shades of red which you only encounter while after-imaging as a result of extreme fatiguing of the “green” opponent

cells in the red-green opponent system. Some of these after-imaged reds are so pure that they are way outside the color solid as we know it; they are very much more saturated than the reds we ordinarily know. Notice that the color solid, as we know it, is not gappy but packed; that is, there is gradual variation along the dimensions of hue, saturation and brightness, so that each shade is surrounded by neighbors. It is matter of empirical fact that the color solid, that is, the arrangement of shades along the dimensions of hue, saturation and brightness, is packed in this way. Putative gaps have been regarded as anomalous, and led to speculations about missing shades, that is, shades we have not yet encountered. So the purest after-imaged reds may be expected to have neighboring reds which are slightly less pure, and these shades in their turn will have neighbors, and neighbors of neighbors, and so on, which eventually connect the purest reds to the reds we know. The discovery of the purest reds in after-imaging thus suggests that the color solid is bigger than we thought, there are more shades than we have encountered in veridical perception.

These extra shades are of two sorts, the ones we have actually encountered in after-imaging and the hypothesized intermediate shades that connect them to the rest of the color solid.

To be sure, when it comes to the *after-imaged* shades, a friend of qualia can naturally regard these as subjective qualities, qualities had by the experiences of after-imaging. But this strategy fails when it comes to the hypothesized intermediate shades. If we are not to suppose that the color solid is extremely gappy then those intermediate shades must be taken to exist, whether or not they are experienced and whether or not they are actually had by anything. So these shades are not qualia, and they are in a family of qualities that are the colors. So the colors are not qualia; they are objective qualities; they exist whether or not they are experienced and whether or not they are had by anything.

Leo Hurvich describes the effect of twenty minutes of bright monochromatic green light on subjects left in an otherwise dark room. When the green light is turned off, and the room is normally illuminated subjects afterimage a *supersaturated* red, a red more saturated than any surface red one can see, a red purer than the purest spectral red light.¹⁴ Supersaturated red is thus a red which you can only after-image, for no light coming from an object under conditions of normal viewing could reveal that shade as the true color of an object.

Now consider the intermediate shades that connect supersaturated red to the rest of the color solid. They need not be after-imaged yet,

¹⁴ See L. M. Hurvich, *Color Vision* (Sinauer Associates Inc., Mass., 1982), pp 187-8.

and they need not be had by any surface or volume or light. But they must be supposed to exist on threat of opening up a large gap in the color solid. They are therefore objective in that they exist even when not experienced. So they are not qualia. Yet they are in a qualitative family with the other shades, so none of the shades are qualia. Note that this result holds even given so-called “subjectivism” about color, namely that things are not really colored. The colors would still exist, and they would not be qualia.

Unfelt Pains?

What, finally, of pain, and other bodily qualities? If pain is objective in the sense at issue then surely it could exist unfelt, and surely this is absurd?

The first thing to say is that “pain” is often used as a shorthand for “feeling pain,” and, trivially, in that sense of “pain” there are no “unfelt” pains. The second thing to say is that if “pain” is being used as a name for a quality, that quality might exist even at one of those rare happy moments when no one is having a pain anywhere in his or her body, i.e. moments when the quality pain is not presenting at any location in anyone’s body. Otherwise, after just such a happy moment, we would have a quality popping back into existence once it is felt again. But once the category of quality comes into view it is hard to conceive of a quality having what Locke called “a second beginning of existence.”

Moreover, the indefinite singular “a pain” (as in “a pain that is unfelt”) has “pains” as its plural, and nobody should think that these are names for qualities, as opposed to ways of referring to occasions of feeling the quality pain at some place in one’s body. So even though “unfelt pains” refers to nothing possible, the quality pain existing though unfelt is not only a possible but a desirable state.

But there is more to be said. The quality pain may be either an object of attention or a manner of presentation of something else, namely of a state of bodily disorder, or more inchoately of the bodily part which happens to hurt. Probably the best account for the phenomenology of pain allows for both aspects; something is presented as hurting, and the hurt or pain itself also captures our attention. Now the quality, pain or hurt, may be a quality which only presents as part of the total presentation of a bodily field in which that quality is located, but that is a fact about the restricted nature of its presentations, a fact which does not itself make the quality mind-dependent.

So also with the painful manner in which some part of our body presents when it hurts; this too may only be accessed by a nervous system which is also accessing a larger presentation that is a body image.

What then of the body image, in which pains are located; surely that is subjective? No; a body image is the presentation of a global bodily state by way of a quasi-three-dimensional quality-filled array. The body-state presented is a physical condition. Then there is the qualitative way in which it is presented.

Where then exactly *is* the mind-dependence which is supposedly the hallmark of “subjectivity”?