

There's More to Transparency than Windows

Introduction

One of the most fascinating and recurring anchors across different theories in philosophy of mind is the curious phenomenon of the transparency or diaphanousness of experience. Moore attempts to capture this observation here:

“Though philosophers have recognised that something distinct is meant by consciousness, they have never yet had a clear conception of what that something is. They have not been able to hold it and blue before their minds and to compare them, in the same way in which they can compare blue and green. And this for the reason I gave above: namely that the moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. Yet it can be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for. My main object in this paragraph has been to try to make the reader see it: but I fear I shall have succeeded very ill.”
(Moore 1903, 450)

The tension in Moore's mind and his struggle with it are palpable. On the one hand, he is pointing to something we can all experience for ourselves - the elusive nature of experience, which we seemingly cannot focus on except by focusing on its objects. But on the other hand, what Moore is pointing to is so elusive - as he says, it “seems to vanish” upon closer inspection - that we can begin to doubt that anything is being successfully pointed out, making Moore “fear [he has] succeeded very ill”.

This tension and the accompanying struggle to resolve it are the topics of this paper. We hold that transparency is an important datum about natural human experience, but this datum has been interpreted in a number of different ways and has been used to scaffold different theories of mind. Appreciating what different scaffolds bring to the fore sheds new light onto the elusive nature of experience and onto the nature of transparency as a datum, helping to resolve the Moorean tension.

To that end, this paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, we sketch some major post-Moore contemporary attempts to capture the transparency datum in order to get clearer on some of the existing interpretative differences. In the second section, we consider two widespread frames or scaffolds (to borrow Bayne and Spener 2010 term from a related context), the window scaffold and the mirror scaffold, that often structure those different interpretations. We note that these scaffolds have different strengths, but fail to fully capture certain salient features of the transparency datum. In the third section, we introduce a new scaffold for thinking about the transparency datum. This new scaffold, which we have developed through our cross-cultural engagement with Classical South Asian epistemology, suggests that the transparency of experience is

like the polarization of purple into red and blue. We conclude by considering what the three scaffolds converge on, which we take to be the transparency datum itself.

1. Interpreting the transparency datum

One of the striking aspects of thinking about the transparency of experience is how many others have already done so, in great detail. The transparency observation in common seems to be roughly this: finding out your own thoughts on some subject matter sometimes seems to happen simply by considering that subject matter. There is no sense of additionally considering your thoughts, after having considered the subject matter, in order to know what you think about it. Let us term those who anchor some significant part of their overall view in the phenomenon of transparency “transparency theorists.” Moore (1903), Wittgenstein (1958), Edgley (1969), Evans (1982), Harman (1986), Tye (2002), Peacocke (1996), Moran (2001), Boyle (2009), Hill (2009), and Byrne (2005, 2018), among others, all qualify as transparency theorists, even though they all capture this phenomenon in different ways.

Here is Edgley’s way of capturing it, which is starkly different from Moore’s:

"my own present thinking, in contrast to the thinking of others, is transparent in the sense that I cannot distinguish the question "Do I think that P?" from a question in which there is no essential reference to myself or my belief, namely "Is it the case that P?". This does not of course mean that the correct answers to these two questions must be the same; only I cannot distinguish them, for in giving my answer to the question "Do I think that P?" I also give my answer, more or less tentative, to the question "Is it the case that P?" (Edgley 1969, 90)

Edgley’s observation is that the two questions are indistinguishable from the first-person perspective, even though one question is about some external subject matter while the other is about one’s own thoughts or beliefs on that subject matter. As we can see, Edgley interprets this observation by describing his own present thinking as transparent, in this particular way. But as Moran points out, "[t]o claim one question is "transparent" to another is not to claim that one question reduces to the other" (2001, 61).

Interestingly, Evans seems to disagree, suggesting that there is indeed something equivalent about the two questions – perhaps how we answer them:

[I]n making a self-ascription of belief, one’s eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward – upon the world. If someone asks me “Do you think there is going to be a third world war?,” I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question “Will there be a third world war?” (Evans 1982, 225)

Byrne follows Evans in emphasizing that experience is transparent because, when we turn our attention inward, all we get are objects. Byrne approvingly cites Tye’s statement that, when we try to focus on experiences, we “see right through them to the world outside” (2009, 434). The “surely plausible” claim that Byrne sees here is the idea that

“we do not know of our experiences by ‘looking within’ – by a quasi-perceptual faculty of introspection. How do we know of them, then? Tye’s answer is that we know of them by looking without.” Although both Tye and Byrne present their understanding of the outward direction of introspection as consistent with Moore’s account of experience as diaphanous, the observations are starkly different. For Moore, the idea that we see right through experiences to the objects that they represent is merely the result of not attending carefully enough to our own awareness. However, if we do attend carefully, we can in fact focus on awareness itself.

The differences between what Moore, Edgley, Moran, Evans, and Byrne emphasize about transparency are so significant that a reasonable question arises: are they all trying to capture the same phenomenon, or are they pointing to different aspects of experience? This question presents a turning point: if there is no phenomenon in common that all transparency theorists are interested in, then there is much less common ground among them than the term “transparency theorist” suggests. In this paper, we entertain and focus on a different possibility: that all transparency theorists indeed have something in common - an interest in the datum that transparency presents. What that datum is, why it is so differently captured by different transparency theorists, and why it has proven to be so elusive are all issues we address on our way to showing that entertaining this possibility - that there is a transparency datum in common among transparency theorists - leads to some valuable explanatory results.

One of those explanatory results is straight-forwardly accessible: if there is indeed a transparency datum in common, then the differences between the various transparency theorists could have more to do with how the transparency datum is interpreted, rather than their disagreement about the transparency datum itself. Just because transparency theorists agree on a datum does not mean that they all take the same thing away from it or put that datum to the same use. The interpretive scaffolding that transparency theorists bring to the datum matters.

One salient way in which interpretive scaffolding matters is that the framework a theorist brings to the datum will influence what, precisely, that theorist takes to be transparent. Already, we have put forward the observation in terms of (i) questions being transparent to each other (Edgley, Evans), (ii) one’s own present thinking being transparent (Edgley), and (iii) perception or perceptual experiences being transparent (Byrne, Tye). And if we think of introspection as involving some mix of these three items - asking yourself some questions about what you believe, thinking about your own thinking, or as attending to your experiences, perceptual and otherwise - then, in addition to these three, transparency can also be cast as an observation about (iv) introspection, as Moore does:

“the moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see *what*, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous.” (Moore 1903,450)

Moore's descriptions of transparency - with which we began - are particularly telling of how difficult it is to capture the transparency datum neutrally, without interpreting it by hypothesizing or stipulating which metaphysical structures might be responsible for it. Transparency for him is experienced in the process of introspection - in his example, trying to focus on your current perceptual experience of blue - but he clearly has a very specific metaphysical explanation in mind. Indeed, for those fascinated by transparency, the value of transparency seems to come from its use as a guide to the underlying metaphysics - be it the metaphysics of perception, introspection, or something else. Even if transparency is just a phenomenological observation, it seems to be of the sort that can help us discover something important about the structure of our experiences and even our minds. It is for this reason that it is worth approaching transparency as a datum, open to interpretation, in the hopes of shedding light onto the nature of experience.

To better appreciate the existing differences in interpretation of the transparency datum and thereby get a better idea of what the transparency datum is as an agreed-upon phenomenon, let us now consider the interpretative scaffolding needed to turn the transparency datum into transparency-based theories, be those theories about thinking, perception, introspection, or something else. While the transparency datum itself remains elusive as we try to converge on it, it is nonetheless possible to extract how different transparency theorists think we should approach interpreting that datum, whatever it happens to be. As we hope to show, it is the metaphysical expectations concerning the nature of awareness that each of the transparency theorists starts with that crucially constrain their interpretation of the transparency datum.

2. Interpretative scaffolds for the transparency datum

If the transparency datum can be a guide to metaphysics, how the transparency datum is initially interpreted will be crucial to the metaphysical picture that will emerge as a result. Since the transparency datum emerges in awareness, our metaphysical expectations about the nature of awareness play a particularly significant role in our initial interpretations of the transparency datum. To demonstrate the significance of that initial metaphysically weighted interpretation of transparency, consider some of the mental scaffolds we could use to help us turn the transparency datum into a cornerstone of a theory. Since there is already some agreement that the transparency of experience could be understood in terms of certain questions being answerable in the same way, let us begin with that particular interpretative scaffold.

2.1 The window scaffold

To begin with, let us consider what sort of scaffolding could be made out of the suggestion that the question of what we think or believe is transparent to the question of how things are in the world. Evans presents this suggestion particularly clearly, hinting that he sees an important perceptual element in the transparency datum, insofar as our eyes are, "so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward" when answering a question about what we think (1982, 225). This way of putting the transparency datum is highly suggestive of an analogy with a transparent object such as a window: even

though there is some object in our way (the glass of the window), this object is transparent and does not draw the focus away from what we are looking at or thinking about.

The window analogy presents the transparency datum in a particular light and in doing so, nudges us towards a particular view about the nature of awareness. What the window analogy suggests is that awareness is transparent in the sense of not requiring our attention to it in order to reap its benefits. Just as a window itself does not require our attention in order for us to see what's behind it, so does awareness itself not require any attention in order for us to know what we see or what we think.

This way of thinking about transparency nudges us towards representationalism or intentionalism (e.g. Tye 199x and 2002, Byrne 200x and 2018): the view on which, roughly, we do not (and on some versions, cannot) become aware of any of the intrinsic features of current and conscious experience. On this view, experience itself is rather like a window: it is the thing that grants us access to the world regardless of whether we can pay attention to it as an item in our minds. To that extent, experience is transparent because that's how awareness is thought to work on this view - we can be aware of all sorts of things without having to be aware of our awareness of them.

Thinking about the window scaffold can illuminate the starting point for observing the transparency datum. What the window scaffold brings out is the oddness of answering two radically different questions - one about your thoughts and the other about the world - in the same way. One would expect to have to investigate two different areas to answer them, the world and one's own mind, but it appears that investigating the world can (at least sometimes) suffice. Pressing questions arise immediately, motivating further investigation: Is this really what we do? And if so, is this another example of human epistemic shortcomings to overcome, or an unexpected insight into an epistemic shortcut we are still figuring out how to fully appreciate?

It is very difficult to tell at this stage how to answer these questions, in large part because the window scaffolding can only take us so far in illuminating the transparency datum. The issue is that the window analogy imports some details that also obscure, rather than only illuminate, the transparency datum. Some of those details have been brought out before:

"When we consider paradigmatic examples of transparent objects from everyday life, such as panes of glass, there is no question that the sense of transparency in question must be weak transparency (and thus, that weak transparency must be sufficient to capture the notion of transparency). The window next to my desk overlooks the roof of my neighbor's house. As I look out the window, it is difficult for me to avoid seeing right through it to my neighbor's roof, but it is by no means impossible for me to do so. If I angle my head just so, or if the light is right, I can undeniably focus on the pane of glass of the window itself. (And this is true even on those rare occasions when the window has been recently cleaned.)" (Kind 2003, 233)

What Kind brings out is that the transparency of windows does not prevent them from being perceptually detected or becoming objects of awareness. If anything, it is rare for the window to go undetected, even when the window has been recently cleaned. So the window analogy has a built-in tension between the window being transparent and being detectable that prevents us from making more progress in capturing the transparency datum. This tension can unfortunately be inherited by some versions of representationalism, so the helpfulness of the window scaffolding in illuminating the transparency datum (and equally, clearly supporting a coherent view) is limited. To make further progress in converging on the transparency datum, it would be helpful to consider another interpretative scaffold that can help us see the transparency datum in a different light.

2.2 *The mirror scaffold*

Although the mirror scaffold and the window scaffold have been used interchangeably by some transparency theorists (see, for instance, Byrne's (2008, 434) discussion of Tye's understanding of Moore), the mirror provides a different frame for considering the transparency datum. To get from the window scaffold to the mirror scaffold, recall Moran's point from the introduction that just because two questions can be answered in the same way does not mean that they reduce to one another. But what if they did? Entertaining the possibility that the reason why the two questions can be answered in the same way is that they somehow reflect one another - presumably, because they both get at the very same item - brings us to the mirror scaffold. Here is Moore sketching the mirror scaffold:

"A mental image is conceived as if it were related to that of which it is the image (if there be any such thing) in exactly the same way as the image in a looking-glass is related to that of which it is the reflexion; in both cases there is identity of content, and the image in the looking-glass differs from that in the mind solely in respect of the fact that in the one case the other constituent of the image is 'glass' and in the other case it is consciousness. If the image is of blue, it is not conceived that this 'content' has any relation to the consciousness but what it has to the glass; it is conceived merely to be its content." (Moore 1903, 448-9)

Here, Moore is wondering whether there is any meaningful difference between an object that is being reflected/experienced and the object itself. The extent to which an experience vanishes, in Moore's sense, corresponds to the degree to which what is experienced just is the object. What the mirror analogy conveys is that, just as there is no difference between the blue reflected in the mirror and the blue causing the reflection, there is no difference between the object in experience and the object causing the experience.

The mirror scaffold does something similar to the window scaffold by suggesting the idea that it's possible for a representation (or on Moore's own view, a sense datum) to provide transparent access to an object: given a perfect mirror, when I see the reflection of the object in it, I just see the object. The central insight that the mirror scaffold brings

is that the occasional similarity between what is out there in the world and what is in our minds is non-accidental. There is a metaphysical reason why when we ask certain questions or do certain things - perceive or introspect, as Moore is inviting us to do - not only the answer turns out to be the same, but also the method by which we get it can be the same (we gather this to be the basis for Byrne's 2018 view).

The insight of the mirror scaffold adds something to our understanding of the transparency datum that the window analogy obscures, namely, the pervasiveness of the transparency datum. The internal tension of the window scaffold, leaving it open whether and when the window is perfectly transparent or realistically detectable, makes it difficult to assess the nature and the significance of the transparency datum. Precisely because of that tension, the window scaffold is an excellent tool in motivating further investigation of the transparency datum, but the window scaffold itself does not offer much by way of guidance as to how to continue that investigation. That's where the mirror scaffold comes in: it offers us a way to continue that investigation of the transparency datum by introducing the hypothesis that there is some metaphysical regularity behind the transparency datum. Experience vanishes because the object in experience just is the object, perfectly reflected in a transparent medium.

Having said that, the mirror scaffold does have something important in common with the window scaffold: they both model transparency on transparent items such as glass, a component of both windows and mirrors. It is for this reason that both scaffolds ultimately hit a similar explanatory ceiling when it comes to the transparency datum. Neither is able to escape the tension inherent in postulating a transparent item that facilitates our awareness, having to explain how that item could do so while we are not aware of it (because it is transparent) while somehow being all we are aware of (because it is our current experience). This is one place where introducing descriptions under which we are and are not aware of the transparent item cannot help us, because the question of what we are aware of in this case is substantive: are we or are we not aware of any aspects of our experience under *any* description? Insofar as transparent items are being introduced by both the window and the mirror scaffolds, these scaffolds leave open both "yes" and "no" answers: there is an item we could become aware of, but since that item is transparent it can be left open as to whether we ever do become aware of it. This non-committal nature of both the window and the mirror scaffolds limits their ability to shed more light onto the transparency datum, so let us turn to a very different scaffold altogether: one on which transparency is understood not as a feature of items like windows or mirrors, but as a feature of processes, structures, or organizations. To construct this scaffold, we first need to introduce a framework that is quite different from the one we have been operating in thus far.

3. Transparency as polarization

This section of the paper will ask the reader to entertain, as a live possibility, an understanding of awareness in perception that is fundamentally different from the window and mirror scaffolds. The framework we consider now is derived from post-

Dharmakīrtian Classical South Asian epistemology, and Pratyabhijñā Śaivism in particular. Relying on this framework entails taking some aspects of these views outside of their historical purview, but in doing so, our aim is to draw out an approach that could provide an illuminating scaffold for unpacking the transparency datum.

3.1 A primer in the methods of Classical South Asian epistemology

Setting up our alternative frame requires some background about how epistemology works in Classical South Asian traditions. The following presentation will necessarily over-simplify, but we endeavor to provide as accurate a basic orientation as possible. To begin with, South Asian logicians used linguistic analysis as the basic paradigm for examining reality. The starting point for South Asian philosophical analysis was the question of how the different factors of a sentence contribute to the realization of the action expressed by the verb. The verb itself defines the type of analysis under way; if we want to understand how awareness works, our analysis proceeds by analyzing the action of being aware. The rigorous precision of the Sanskrit language provided ample tools in this endeavor. Sanskrit, like Latin, is a case-based language: the role of various words in a sentence is denoted by their declensional endings. Six of the seven cases serve to show how various nominals relate to the action of the verb. Only the genitive relates nominals to each other. (An additional case, the vocative, calls to an outside entity and was treated separately).

Philosophical attention fell, in particular, on how three cases express the action of the verb: the nominative (which names the subject of the sentence), the accusative (which names the object), and the instrumental (which names the instrument or the means of the action). To give a trivial example to clarify the analytical structure here, consider the sentence “The girl throws the ball with her arm.” Here, “the girl” is the subject, “the ball” is the object, “her arm” is the instrument, and “throwing” is the action itself that is under consideration. The overall aim of this analysis is to understand the action of throwing itself. The basic idea is that if we can understand what it is for the girl to be the subject of the action of throwing (that is, what the factors are that constitute being a thrower), and what it is for the ball to be the object (the factors that constitute being the thrown thing), and what it is for her arm to be the instrument (the factors that constitute being the means of throwing), then we can understand what it is for an action to be throwing. We can understand both what is invariant in the structure of the relationship between the action of throwing and the factors that express that action, and also what can change. For instance, the object of the action of throwing has to be a thing whose location is changed in a certain kind of way, but it doesn’t have to be a ball. It could very well be a rock.

The basic consensus among various traditions, particularly from around the 6th century CE onward, was that if we can understand who is aware of something, what they are aware of, and how they are aware of it, then we can understand the action of being aware to which these factors all contribute. Subject, object, and instrument of awareness are relative terms that emerge only in relation to a particular moment of being aware. In line with this structure, we’ll be using the following terminology. “Awareness” means the event under consideration that instantiates the action of being aware. “Awareness” is parallel with “throwing” in the above example; it is unfortunate

that “aware-ing” is not an appropriately-signifying word in English. “Subject-side factors of awareness” means the factors that constitute being the subject of the action of being aware. These are parallel to the factors that constitute being the thrower in the above example. Likewise, “object-side factors of awareness” means the factors that constitute being the object of the action of being aware; they are parallel to the factors that constitute being thrown. We will sometimes speak of “subject” and “object” for brevity, but these terms should be understood as factors contributing to the expression of the action, not as independent entities.

The reader will notice that we will not talk explicitly about the factors that constitute the instrument of being aware in what follows. Readers familiar with post-Dharmakīrtian Classical South Asian epistemology will likely note that our presentation proceeds in line with the position that the instrument just is the awareness itself. Defending this position, however, is a complex matter that would take us far afield of the current discussion, and so we will set it aside for now.

Since knowing is a particular kind of being aware, in the sense that knowing is awareness of things as they actually are, an investigation of the nature of an act of awareness touches on both metaphysics and epistemology. This basic framework of *pramāṇa-vāda*, debate concerning the sources of knowledge, allowed different traditions to precisely and vociferously argue about the nature of reality in the context of how actions of knowing instantiate that reality. There were many traditions that argued that there is nothing faulty about our access to reality: our instruments of knowing allow us to have knowledge about all aspects of what they measure, and this knowledge generally accords with how things appear to us in the everyday world. There were other traditions that claimed that following through on what our instruments of knowing really reveal to us indicates that things are more complicated. On this line, it’s true that the factors constituting an action appear to be distinct both from each other and from the action itself (the subject is not the object, and neither are the action itself), but an analysis of how the factors and the action relate to each other may indicate that the apparent transparency of a subject/object structured awareness depends on both the subject and the object being *nothing but* aspects of awareness itself. In this case, what an experience is transparent in relation to is not an external object, but only its own aspects. This line of thought allows us to construct a third interpretative scaffold for the transparency datum.

3.2 *The purple scaffold*

Let’s try a new analogy or scaffold for interpreting the transparency datum. Say that awareness across time is like a purple stream coursing across a computer monitor. Pick out one moment in this stream and abstract it for analysis; think of this moment as a purple screenshot. Open the screenshot in a graphic design program and apply a filter that polarizes the purple into its constituent shades, red and blue. The screenshot is still there, but we no longer see the purple. We only see the red and the blue. The purple of the screenshotted moment contains within itself various factors that could be seen as blue if we exclude red from them, or red if we exclude blue. The red and the blue together are nothing but the purple, but if we try to analytically distinguish either red or blue, we automatically erase the purple as we polarize the moment as a whole. By its

very nature, purple can be split into red and blue. Yet, once this split occurs, the purple itself vanishes. In this analogy, subject and object are like the red and blue into which the purple can be polarized. Awareness is like the purple that seems to vanish, and yet always remains as that which polarizes, when we split the purple into red and blue.

Following this analogy, awareness transparently expresses as a subject/object structured moment of perception just like how the exclusion of red from blue and blue from red just is the emergence of two apparently distinct entities that are actually particular ways of polarizing purple. Their appearance as distinct depends on their mutual exclusion from each other, and the creation of the exclusion just is the fact that purple no longer manifests as purple, but as polarized into red and blue. Neither the red nor the blue has any reality independent of the purple, and neither is more constitutive of purple than the other. In the same way, neither subject nor object have any reality independent of the moment of awareness within which they occur, and neither is more closely tied to awareness than the other. Even if we were to think of pure red, or pure blue --- if we tried to analyze only the subject or only the object of an awareness --- we necessarily form this thought by excluding the opposing color. This is why both the awareness and the subject seem to vanish when we focus intently on the object. Simply to focus on the object is to exclude the others.

Put the purple screenshot back into the stream out of which we abstracted it, and you have a flow of varyingly polarized moments of awareness, each moment shaped by previous moments and in turn shaping the possibilities for future expression. The purple stream itself represents the mix of all of the possible factors that could influence how a particular moment of awareness arises. This stream equally includes the factors that could polarize as blue and factors that could polarize as red. In the same way, awareness itself equally includes factors that can appear as objects and factors that can appear as subjects. So, awareness is not exhausted by the subject; the object is an equally significant aspect of awareness.

3.3 What the purple scaffold shows

We are now in a position to consider the interpretation of the transparency datum that the polarization analogy brings with it. Any form of awareness, be it in perception or introspection, is like purple as described, which explains how it transparently reveals its object: both the subject and the object are undistorted by any mediators, such as glass or representations. The object just is an aspect of awareness, as is the subject, and directing our attention to that awareness (i.e. introspecting) polarizes it into particular constituent factors. It is precisely the absence of mediation between the subject and object that allows for this process to unfold transparently. In directing our attention to awareness, we are delimiting and excluding the subject-side factors from the object-side factors. If our eyes happen to be literally directed outward on the world, as Evans suggests, then our focus will be on the object-side factors at the expense of the subject-side factors, thereby creating the impression that all there is is the object. One thing that this analogy suggests that something similar can happen with the subject: resonant with what Moore brought out, it is possible to focus on the subject-side factors at the

expense of the object-side factors. As Moore also suggested, and as many South Asian contemplative traditions would affirm, focusing on the subject-side factors requires practice and skill. Yet, to echo Moore, these factors “can be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and if we know that there is something to look for” (Moore 1903, 450).

To make this more concrete, let’s apply the analogy to a visual experience. First, we’ll see what it is for me to see my cat, then, what it is for me to think that I see my cat. Finally, we’ll consider what it means for me to have self-knowledge as I see my cat.

When I see my cat, the total awareness event (the purple) is co-constituted by (i) myself, where I am understood simply as the subset of subject-side factors that are active in shaping the awareness (the red), and (ii) the cat, where the cat is understood as the subset of the object-side factors that are active in shaping the awareness (the blue). In that moment of awareness the subject (myself) and the object (my cat) are excluded from each other by the polarizing effect of attention. The absence of mediation between the subject and object is experienced as the transparency of perceptual awareness, and revealed by the fact that I see nothing but my cat.

Now, what does it take for me to think that I see my cat? It’s true that if I ask myself whether or not I’m seeing my cat, I direct my attention to the object-side factors that co-constitute my awareness, which are excluded from the subject-side factors. If my cat is present as an external object in my visual field, then I think that I’m seeing my cat. I’m able to think this precisely because I (the red) and my cat (the blue) are both just aspects of the underlying awareness (the purple), rather than because I am representing my cat. Adding a representation to mediate my awareness of my cat does not help, because the postulation of my cat as a representation obscures what it is for my cat to appear as an external object. The cat (the blue) transparently appearing as external (just as blue) depends on the exclusion of what is internal (the red), as well as on the fact that the external object and the internal subject are both just aspects of the underlying awareness (the purple). Although the direction of my attention is toward the aspect of my awareness delimited as external (my cat), the direction of attention is not in fact outward or inward. My attention never leaves the awareness event to turn to something else. It merely polarizes that awareness event to transparently reveal its co-constituting factors, including my cat. We could better describe the direction of my attention as depth-ward, towards the awareness itself.

Finally, let’s consider what it would mean to have self-knowledge. To be precise on this point, we will follow Byrne in taking “self-knowledge” to mean “knowledge of one’s mental states” (2018, 1). Byrne’s own account indicates that self-knowledge is just first-personally acquired knowledge about particular facts about the world, such as the external p-facts that could indicate to me, via nociception, that I am in pain (2018, 149). In contrast, according to the purple scaffold, there are two distinct questions that I can ask about my awareness. I can question the object or I can question the subject. One’s mental states as expressed in a particular moment of awareness are subject-side factors. Since subject-side factors equally co-constitute the awareness, subject-side

factors are equally available for analysis precisely as the internal factors shaping the awareness. Self-knowledge, like vision, is founded on directly available perceptual data, but this data isn't some set of facts postulated to exist out in the world. There is no need to postulate something external to the awareness. Subject-side factors are available precisely to the extent that they are merely that: factors that co-constitute the particular way that the awareness happens. If one tries to get self-knowledge by interrogating the object in awareness --- if one thinks that we need something like external p-facts out in the world to answer the question of whether or not we're in pain --- one is simply focusing on the wrong set of factors constituting the awareness. It is as if one is asking questions about the red by focusing on the blue.

Consider how one might shift one's focus to the red instead. If I were to ask myself whether or not I'm happy as I see my cat, there's no particular object in my visual field that can answer this question. My happiness is not an external object. This does not mean that my happiness is not directly shaping the contents of my awareness, or that the object is something other than the awareness. Just as a particular shade of blue manifests only when purple is delimited in relation to a particular shade of red, the object (in this case, my cat) is delimited as it is only in relation to the subject (in this case, me). To see the affective aspects shaping the object, I need to attend to different aspects of the awareness: in this case, the happiness that is present not as an object, but *as that which co-constitutes the awareness alongside* the object. My awareness of my cat when I'm stressed, crabby, and trying to type is different than my awareness of my cat when I'm relaxed, happy, and want cuddles. This difference is not in the object, or even really in how the object appears, but rather of the presence or absence of particular subject-side factors that, together with the object, constitute my awareness as a whole.

Conclusion: the transparency datum

There are different ways of capturing and interpreting the transparency datum, and those different interpretations reflect the scaffolding of different theories of awareness. It has been our goal to show that despite those differences, there is something in common that transparency theorists share: the idea that there is an important datum about the nature of awareness that is worth theorizing, even though it may be difficult to capture. Entertaining the different scaffolds for interpreting that datum helps us do that, just as seeing something in different light can help us converge on what that something is. What all three scaffolds converge on, then, is that the phenomenon of transparency is experienced during, and perhaps marks, normal human awareness – the experience of a living being trying to get by in the world they find themselves in.

What the purple scaffold brings is an illustration of what it could be to engage in the action of being aware such that we would experience the transparency that the window and the mirror scaffold highlight. This scaffold proposes that awareness is like purple and transparency is like polarization. Purple can polarize into two distinct things, red and blue, because red and blue together are nothing but purple. In the same way, a moment of awareness polarizes into two seemingly distinct things, subject and object,

because the subject and the object are nothing but aspects of awareness. This analogy indicates that trying to direct your attention to your own experience polarizes the awareness into subject and object, thereby making the underlying awareness itself seem to vanish. But it also indicates that there is no buffer or mediator between the subject and the object. This is the sense in which experience is transparent: both subject and object are nothing but factors co-constituting an experience, which vanishes when we direct our attention to it, like purple vanishes when polarized into red and blue. In this framework, the direction of introspection is neither outward nor inward, but more depthward, into the details of the factors constituting a moment of awareness.

Reflecting back on Moore's struggle to put the transparency datum into words, that struggle is key to appreciating the transparency datum itself: the fact that awareness itself is elusive and can easily vanish without careful scrutiny.

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