

In Praise of Poise*

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1. The notion of access consciousness was first described in Ned Block's "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness" as follows:

A state is access conscious if, in virtue of one's having the state, a representation of its content is (1) inferentially promiscuous, that is, poised for use as a premise in reasoning, (2) poised for rational control of action, and (3) poised for rational control of speech. (Block, 1995, 231)

A very striking feature of this definition is its use of the notion of poise. This notion can be understood in various ways, but for Block, to be poised to do something is to be disposed to do it *in a certain way*, i.e., in a way that means that one is on the verge of doing what one is disposed to do. To be poised, he says, is to be "ready and waiting. To be poised to attack is to be on the verge of attacking" (1995, 245).¹

One way to bring out the attractiveness of appealing to a notion like poise is to consider how plausible a definition of access consciousness would be if instead of having 'poised for use as a premise...', 'poised for rational control...', etc., we merely had '*disposed* for use as premise...', '*disposed* for rational control...' etc. Such a definition would fail to distinguish an access conscious state from almost any sort of ordinary psychological state such a belief or an intention or a perception. For it is reasonable to think that almost any such state will be closely associated with rational dispositions to think and do various things, and in that sense would be involved in rationally controlling thought and action.

For example, suppose there is a Tintin book—*The Castafiore Emerald*, say²—on the floor next to me and I see it. I am therefore in the state of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald*. In consequence I am disposed to do various things—reach for the book if I want it, acknowledge its existence if asked etc. This is not to say that the state of seeing the book is exhausted by these dispositions, nor that we might be able to identify the dispositions in ways that do not appeal to the

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¹ The notion of poise has also been used by Michael Tye in his so-called 'panic' theory of phenomenal consciousness; see Tye 1995, 2000 and for discussion see Byrne 2002. (Adam Pautz points out that a somewhat similar idea is present in Evans 1980.) One important difference between Tye's use and Block's is that Tye appeals to the notion in the course of trying to account for phenomenal consciousness; Block, by contrast, uses it only to account for access consciousness. I follow Block in this. The notion also has a different use in the phenomenological tradition; see, e.g., Merleau-Ponty 1962, and for a brief discussion Carman 1999.

² Herge 1963; cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Castafiore_Emerald. It is worth noting that I have a very standard case of seeing in mind—there are no duplicate Tintin books around, I represent the book as having various relevant properties (e.g. being a book) and so on.

state itself, nor is it to be too specific about what the dispositions in question are. But it *is* to say that if I am in the state, I will have this disposition. In consequence, if we operate with a definition of access consciousness stated in terms of dispositions *but not* poise, it would follow that, if I am in the state at all, I will be in an access conscious state; and this is the wrong result. It is not problematic that a state of this kind might on occasion be or become access conscious. But it *is* problematic that it is access conscious simply because of the state that it is. By contrast, if we operate with a definition of access consciousness in terms of poise, this result is avoided. For the mere fact that I am in the state of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* does not make it true that I am poised to reach for it, or poised to acknowledge that it is there if asked.

So the definition of access consciousness that Block offers in terms of poise is in at least this way attractive. But Block doesn't hold it any more! In fact, he gave it up almost immediately on presenting it in 1995. Why did he give it up? The reason is that the poise definition portrays access consciousness in overly modal terms, and in particular as a dispositional feature of a state. Of course, as we have just seen, it does not portray it as *merely* a dispositional feature; being poised entails being disposed but not vice versa. But it does portray access consciousness as at least a dispositional feature. And this is enough, or so runs the objection, to reject this account of access consciousness. As a result, in 1997 and subsequent papers, Block dropped the poise definition in terms of another which draws on the idea of being globally broadcast, an idea developed by Bernard Baars (1988; see also Block 1997, 2007, 2008, and the references therein) as part of the so-called global workspace theory of consciousness.³

I will argue that dropping the poise definition was a mistake. I begin (§2-4) by looking more closely at Block's 1995 definition, and the objection—the modal objection, I will call it—that led him to abandon it. Next (§5) I examine Block's replacement definition, and argue it does not solve the modal objection. I will then (§§6-13) propose and defend an alternative definition that resuscitates the notion of poise, at least as a necessary condition. On the definition I will offer, access consciousness is accounted for partly in terms of poise and partly in terms of attention; in slogan form, a state is access conscious if it involves poise grounded in attention. I will end (§14-17) with some remarks about the relation between access consciousness and the other sorts of consciousness that Block distinguishes, in particular phenomenal consciousness. An important and, I think, attractive feature of Block's discussion overall is its pluralism, i.e., its commitment to the idea that there are various different notions of consciousness and that our overall notion is an

³ Block has not only given up the definition of access consciousness offered in the 1995 paper, in more recent work he even avoids the distinctive vocabulary of that paper, talking in terms of a contrast between phenomenology versus cognitive access, rather than in terms of the phenomenal/access distinction (see Block 2007, 2008). I will use the older vocabulary in this paper, but so far as I can see not much turns on this since the notion of access consciousness marks a sort of cognitive access with which phenomenal consciousness (“phenomenology”) is closely correlated.

amalgam of these parts. This sort of pluralism inevitably raises the question of what relations obtain among these independent parts. I will not address this question in detail but will instead evaluate one idea about what the connection might be between phenomenal and access consciousness.

2. If we take the passage above and express it in a more explicit form, the result is something like the following:

D1. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if, in virtue of S's being in X, there is a representation of the content of X which is (a) inferentially promiscuous, that is, poised for use in a premise for reasoning; (b) poised for rational control of action; and (c) poised for rational control of speech.⁴

Apart from its employment of poise, there are other striking features of this definition. Among these are:

1. It only gives a necessary condition for access consciousness rather than a necessary *and* sufficient condition.
2. It distinguishes the state that is access conscious from a (sub-individual) representation⁵ that exists in virtue of one's being in the state.
3. It officially requires the representation, rather than either the state or the subject who is in the state, to have the three features mentioned in the definition; that is, it is the representation that is poised for use as a premise etc.
4. It attributes content to the representation that exists in virtue of the subject's being in the state rather than to the state directly.
5. It makes an explicit mention of speech, in clause (c).

⁴ In the presentation to follow I assume that D1 and similar claims are definitions, and will use that label to refer to them. But it is as well to be clear about the assumptions about the nature of definition that I am making for purposes of the paper: (i) Definitions do not include just any necessary or a priori truth about the thing or property question but are restricted to those necessary or priori truths that, intuitively, tell us about the nature or essence of the thing. (ii) Definitions need not be reductive or perfectly general, i.e. contain no reference to particulars or instantiations of properties; they are of interest mainly because they illuminate the nature of the thing in question. And (iii) it does not matter too much what is called a 'definition'. If someone adopts a view of definitions that denies the points just made, that would not affect the arguments in this paper, though it would mean that D1 and its fellows should not be called 'definitions'. These claims and the issues associated with them are difficult to make precise but I will leave this issue impressionistic here. For some discussion see Fine 1994 and Gupta 2008

⁵ My assumption here and throughout is that 'representation' as it occurs in D1 denotes something sub-individual or sub-personal. Of course the notion need not be understood in that way but that is the way I will understand it here.

6. It implicitly says that inferential promiscuity is the same as the idea as being poised for use in a premise for reasoning, in clause (a).
7. It omits, in clause (a) and elsewhere, rational processes that are not inferential in any obvious way—e.g. the transition from perception to belief about the local environment, or from intention to belief about the future, or from any sort of mental state to a *de se* belief that one is in the mental state in question.

All of these points deserve extensive discussion, but I will not do that in what follows. Rather, my procedure will be to operate with a modified version of D1 that permits us to focus on the modal objection and the issues that follow on from it.

The modifications are as follows. First, in the case of 7, I will operate with a generalized notion of being poised for rational control of thought, where this includes processes in which an individual moves from belief to belief (i.e. inferential processes), processes in which an individual moves from intentions or perceptions to beliefs, and processes in which an individual moves from beliefs and intentions to actions. In the case of 6, I will drop the reference to inferential promiscuity; D1 in any case apparently treats it as redundant. In the case of 5, I will include clause (c) under clause (a), and treat speaking as a rational action that only certain sorts of creatures can perform, just as dancing is a rational action that only certain sorts of creatures can perform. (This is not to deny that speech may be particularly important from an evidential point of view when it does occur.) In the case of 4, 3 and 2, I will focus on the idea of a state's being poised for use by a subject in rational thought and action, rather than a representation, which as I have noted in this context is assumed to be a sub-individual or sub-personal notion. Moreover, I will assume that for a state to be poised for use by a subject in rational thought and action means, in effect, that the *subject* is poised to do certain rational things in virtue of being in the state; for example, poised to form certain beliefs or to perform certain actions. (This is not to deny that a state that the subject is in might consist in there being some sort of representation, but this idea seems to me to be something that needs to be treated independently rather than as part of a definition.) Finally, in the case of 1, once we drop the reference to speech, it does no harm to upgrade the definition to one that provides necessary *and* sufficient conditions, rather than just necessary conditions.

Putting these points together we arrive at a second definition of access consciousness:

- D2. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state of S if and only if X is poised for use by S in the rational control of S's thought and action.

To illustrate the picture behind D2, suppose God took the state of my seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* and wanted to make it access conscious; what would he have to do? According to D2, what he would have to do is take the things I am disposed to do as a consequence of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald*, and then make it the case that I am *poised* to do those things, rather than merely being disposed to do them. The upshot would be that I am in an access conscious state.

3. What then is the modal objection to D2? The best entry point is this example due to Tyler Burge:

I may be imaging a rainy night in Salisbury while thinking about philosophy. I could bring the philosophical thoughts to consciousness at any moment, and they may be fully available to all other rational activity. But they could be unconscious—with my being unconscious in those moments of all the philosophical points my mind is working on—until I bring them to consciousness. (Burge 1998/2007, 386)

On the face of it, this example shows that a person's thoughts about philosophy can be poised for rational control and yet intuitively fail to be conscious in *any* sense, i.e., because their mind is consumed with images of a rainy night in Salisbury. But if a state is not conscious in any sense, it is not access conscious *a fortiori*. Hence the right-to-left direction of D2 is false: being poised for rational control is not sufficient for access consciousness.⁶ That, as I understand it, is the modal objection.

That the modal objection is founded on a counterexample tells us something important, viz., it is a presupposition of the objection that D2 and related definitions are designed to capture some distinctive pre-theoretical or intuitive strand in the notion of consciousness, a strand that deserves the name 'access consciousness'. After all, pointing out that a state might be poised for rational control and yet not be conscious in "a natural and straightforward sense" as Burge (2007, 393) says poses no threat whatever if the notion of conscious under discussion is artificial rather than natural. But Burge evidently thinks the objection *is* relevant and *does* constitute a threat. Moreover so does Block; indeed, he takes it to constitute such a threat that the only response is to drop D2 altogether and put something else in its place.

Since the modal objection presupposes that D2 is designed to capture a pre-theoretical or intuitive strand in the notion of consciousness, a possible response to it is to deny this, and say that

⁶ Does the modal objection target D1 as well as D2? That is not so clear. As we have seen, D1 articulates only a necessary condition, and yet the objection concerns sufficiency. It is a bit puzzling, therefore, why Block thinks it is so serious against D1. (Maybe the answer is that he intended something like D2 all along.) In any case I will leave that puzzle unresolved here.

‘access consciousness’ is a technical notion. But in what follows I will set aside this option. Part of the reason for this is, as I have noted, that both Block and Burge assume the opposite, and I want to discuss the issue on their terms. But partly too my reason is that I think they are right, and ‘access consciousness’ is *not* technical notion. For imagine that the thoughts about philosophy Burge describes eventually come to crowd out the images of a rainy night in Salisbury. It would then be natural to describe the thoughts as conscious just as Burge does. But it is not clear that they are conscious in either the phenomenal sense or the monitoring sense, which are the two other salient options here. As regards the monitoring sense, a state is conscious in this sense only if one knows or believes (perhaps in a certain way) that one is in it. But I may have formed no belief at all to the effect that I am thinking about philosophy—indeed, I may be too consumed with philosophy to have done so. And as regards the phenomenal sense, a state is conscious in this sense only if there is something it is like to be in it. But there may be nothing it is like for me to think about philosophy in the relevant way, or at any rate so many philosophers think. If so, the thoughts about philosophy are (a) conscious and (b) not conscious in the monitoring sense or the phenomenal sense. But then it is natural to say that they are access conscious, and to search for a definition, such as D2, which attempts to capture what that notion is.⁷

4. The objection suggested by Burge’s example is similar to an objection pressed on Block 1995 by Anthony Atkinson and Martin Davies, but for them the issue assumes a slightly different form:

Block’s notion of [access] consciousness is a dispositional notion; and when a state has a dispositional property, it is natural to seek a more intrinsic property of the state in virtue of which it has that disposition. So, we can ask, in virtue of what property of my pain state am I in a position to report that I have a pain? Or, in virtue of what property of the pain in my leg is it the case that the content *I have a pain in my leg* is poised for rational control of my actions? The intuitive folk psychological answer is that these dispositions are grounded in my pain’s being a phenomenally conscious state. It is because the pain is [phenomenally] conscious that it is [access] conscious. (Atkinson and Davies 1995, 248)

Atkinson and Davies are concerned here with Block’s suggestion that various writers conflate two unrelated notions of consciousness: access consciousness with phenomenal consciousness. In his 1995 article, Block had argued that this is so. Consciousness, he said, is a mongrel or hybrid notion

⁷ I will also set aside objections to Burge’s example which deny that it is possible; that is, deny that it is a possible description of a person that they are thinking of philosophy at the same time as imaging a rainy night in Salisbury.

combining various unrelated things together. Atkinson and Davies are trying to undermine this suggestion by saying that, while various philosophers and scientists might be running access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness together, they are doing so because they are not distinguishing a disposition and its ground. This suggestion does not disagree with Block that there are two notions, it is rather an attempt to deflate what he says by suggesting that the conflation is, first, of two notions that are closely related, and second, not as damaging as might initially be supposed.

What is the difference between the modal objection advanced by Burge and that advanced by Atkinson and Davies? Atkinson and Davies do not object to Block's account of access consciousness; in our terms, they accept D2. What they argue instead is that if D2 is right, and if any dispositional property has a ground, it would be natural to regard phenomenal consciousness as the ground of access consciousness. By contrast, Burge as we have seen goes further, arguing that it is objectionable that any sort of consciousness could be thought of as dispositional in the way that Block suggests.

How then to respond to Atkinson and Davies? As we have seen, Block's response (1997) is to withdraw D2, and to suggest that access consciousness is not a dispositional notion; hence there is no possibility of regarding the access/phenomenal distinction as a restriction on the dispositional/ground distinction. At first sight, this looks an overreaction; Atkinson and Davies do not object to D2. But Block's response makes more sense when put in the context of Burge's objection. Indeed, it is reasonable to view his retraction of D2 as a response not only to the modal objection in the form given it by Atkinson and Davies but in the stronger form given it by Burge.⁸

5. What then does Block put in place of D2? As I understand him, the definition he adopts is something like this:

D3. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if and only if X consists in a representation which is globally broadcast for free use in the rational control of thought and action.

As Block (1997) notes, 'broadcast' comes from "Baars' (1988) theory that conscious representations are ones that are broadcast in a global workspace," and is related to "Dennett's (1993) notion of consciousness as cerebral celebrity". The general idea is that a state is access

⁸ Block (1997) also rejects a suggestion due to Chalmers (1995) that access consciousness should be connected to global availability on the same modal grounds as he rejects D2.

conscious if it consists in a representation that has this sort of global cognitive property (see Block 1997, 2007, 2008).

But whatever the attractions of D3, it does not answer the modal objection. Take again the case of imaging a rainy night in Salisbury. Why should the representations that constitute thoughts about philosophy not be globally broadcast for free use while at the same time my mind is occupied with images of Salisbury? After all, what does it mean for a representation *to be globally broadcast for free use* in the rational control of thought and action? Perhaps it is true that to be globally broadcast full-stop is a non-dispositional property of a representation, but the more complex property of being globally broadcast *for free use* looks on the face of it dispositional. In particular, it looks as if the representation in question is such that it *can* be used for free use in rational control of thought and action, even if it is not. And this means that D3, like D2, is subject to the modal objection.

Block might reply—and, I think, would reply (see Block 2008)—that what is important in D3 is not simply that a representation can be broadcast for free use but that it is *actually being* used by some systems or other. If so, the difference between imaging a rainy night in Salisbury and thinking about philosophy is that the representations which constitute the first are actually being used by some cognitive system while those which constitute the second are not. But the problem with this is that it is plausible that the representations that constitute thoughts about philosophy are being used too, at least in some sense or other. After all, a person may think for weeks (or years!) about some problem in philosophy, and all of a sudden the solution pops into their head, i.e. suddenly becomes conscious. If so, and we suppose that something like this is going on in Burge's example, the representations that constitute thoughts about philosophy must be doing something in the mind of the person who is having the thoughts: they are not just lying dormant. Hence it seems plausible that they too are being used.

6. So far we have examined the reasons why Block gave up his original definition, and suggested as well that his replacement definition fares no better. In a more positive vein, I now want to develop a proposal about how to define access consciousness that, I think, evades the difficulties we have looked at.

The starting point is to appeal to the notion of attention. The notion of attention, like that of representation, can sometimes mean something that has its home in the sub-individual level rather than the individual level. That is not what I mean. What I have in mind is the ordinary sense in which a person attends to something that they see or intend or know or feel or imagine. In this sense the capacity to attend forms part of the repertoire of ordinary cognitive states and acts that we have, and via introspection recognize that we have, as rational and conscious beings.

For example, when I look around the room, I can see a range of particulars—objects and events—in my local environment. I can see *The Castafiore Emerald*, for example, there on the floor. I can also see an apple core, just to the left, and an Australian two-dollar coin on the right. I am aware also of the properties that these particulars instantiate, and the relations that they participate in: the shape of the coin, the colour of the book, the distance between the book and the apple core, etc. In addition to seeing these objects, properties and relations, however, I can also attend to them. For example, I can attend to the book (and not the coin). Or I can attend to the coin. Likewise I can attend to the shape of the book, or its colour, or the difference in shape between the book and the coin.

Attention in this individual-level sense is, as I have said, a common feature of our experience of the world, and like any such feature it is easier to understand than to analyze. But for my purposes analysis is not necessary. Indeed, the goal of providing some analysis of attention, in either functional or phenomenal terms, seems to me to be an overly ambitious one. What will be necessary instead is to bring out four features of attention, understood in this intuitive way.

The *first* feature is that attention is what I will call a *secondary* psychological state (or event—the distinction between states and events may be ignored for the moment). In calling attention a secondary psychological state I mean something like this. In principle, one can attend to absolutely anything one can think about or refer to in the widest sense: anything of any ontological category (a property, a proposition, an event, an object, etc), and anything of any subject matter (a mental thing, a geographical thing, a mathematical thing etc). However, while one can attend to absolutely anything, what one attends to is always something that one already⁹ bears a particular sort psychological relation to, a relation which is not itself attention. So, if one attends to something, what one pays attention to is always something one knows, or sees, or imagines, or intends or desires, etc. If one thinks of these latter states as primary states, attention is a secondary state in that its occurrence entails the existence of some primary psychological state or other.¹⁰

⁹ I don't mean 'already' in a temporal sense. If the dean suddenly appears in your office brandishing an axe, seeing her and attending to what you see are very likely to happen simultaneously. Rather I mean 'already' in a metaphysical sense: necessarily, if I attend to x then I bear some intentional relation to x which is not itself attention, e.g. I see x, intend x, desire x, know x etc.

¹⁰ The suggestion that attention is a secondary psychological state is reminiscent of a so-called 'adverbial' treatment of attention of the sort defended in Mole 2008 (see also Wu 2011). But there are also differences. First, a consequence of the adverbial view, as I understand it, is that if one attends to something, there is always something (i.e. an action) that one does attentively. This consequence of adverbialism is implausible. Suppose I believe that I can no longer vote for the Labor party, and attend to what I believe. It is not clear here that there is something that I *do* attentively, even if there is something I do, viz. attend to what I believe. The suggestion about attention in the text does not have this consequence. Second, and more generally, the adverbial view is that attending to something is not a straightforward representational state but is instead a way of performing an action—nothing like this follows from the account suggested in the text. (Declan Smithies has suggested to me that these problems might be avoided if one took adverbialism to entail not that I do something attentively, but only that something happens attentively—but it is not clear what it is for something to happen attentively.)

The *second* feature I will call *enhancement*. Suppose I see *The Castafiore Emerald*, and in addition attend to it, i.e., attend to what I see. In the terminology just introduced, my attending to it is a secondary state, and my seeing it is the relevant primary state, the state that must exist if I am to attend at all. Now, as we saw earlier, as a consequence of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald*, I am disposed to do various things, e.g., reach for it if I want it, acknowledge its presence if asked and so on. What then is the effect of attending to (in addition to seeing) *The Castafiore Emerald*? Well, for one thing, it remains the case that I am disposed to do the things just mentioned; attending to what you see normally does not inhibit your seeing of it playing whatever role it plays. But moreover it is very plausible to think that, at least in the normal case, the likelihood of my doing the things I am disposed to do anyway (i.e. in virtue being in the primary state) is enhanced, and moreover is enhanced because I am in the secondary state, that is, because I am attending to what I see. So if, in virtue of seeing the book, I am disposed to acknowledge its presence if asked about it, I am normally more likely to do this if I see the book *and* attend to it. To take a different example, suppose that I believe that one should no longer vote for the Labor Party. In virtue of believing this at all I will be disposed to form other beliefs and to act on these beliefs. But suppose now I attend to what I believe, in addition to merely believing it. It remains the case that I am disposed to form various beliefs and act on them, but (again) in the normal case the likelihood of my doing these things is increased, and is increased because I attend to what I believe. In short, a key feature of attention is that, normally, if one attends to what one believes or what one sees, the likelihood goes up that one will do the things one is disposed to do in virtue of being in those states anyway.

The *third* feature is that attention is a matter of degree. I can attend to *The Castafiore Emerald* to a greater or lesser extent, more than I did a moment ago, more than I do to other things, more than I normally do, and so on. Moreover, there is a connection between increase in attention and increase in enhancement: the more I attend to *The Castafiore Emerald* in addition to seeing it, the more likely it is that I will normally do what I am disposed to do simply by virtue of seeing it.

The *final* feature is that, while attention is often a matter of control—that is, is something that I can freely chose to do—it need not be. Perhaps while trying to write a philosophy paper I become obsessed with some aspect *The Castafiore Emerald*, e.g., the beak of the parrot on the cover. In that case I will attend to something that I see but the fact that I do so is not under my control. Another way to bring out the same point is as follows. On some views, to see *The Castafiore Emerald* at all I must attend to it at least to a small degree. Whether this is true is a controversial matter on which we need take no stand. But suppose (*suppose*) that it is the case. It immediately follows that attention is not always a matter of voluntary control, since it is not up to me whether I see *The Castafiore Emerald* or not.

7. The (incomplete) picture I have just painted of attention is relatively uncontroversial, or should be—but what is its connection to access consciousness?

Well, in virtue of its being a secondary psychological state which enhances a primary state in the way described, attention normally increases the likelihood of my doing what I am disposed to do anyway. Moreover, since attention is a matter of degree, it is plausible to suppose that there is an amount of attention which is such that, if I pay the *The Castafiore Emerald* that much attention when I see it, I will be poised, rather than being merely disposed, to reach for it, to acknowledge its existence if asked, etc.¹¹ The further point that attention is sometimes under voluntary control and is sometimes not removes any suggestion that the attention in question is always a matter of my will. In some cases, I will be poised to do what I am disposed to do, and will be poised to this because I attend to what I see, regardless of what my own inclinations are.

If these points are correct, the following account of access consciousness comes into view:

D4. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if and only if (a) X is poised for use by S in the rational control of S's thought and action; (b) S attends to the content of X¹²; (c) (a) is true because (b) is true, i.e. S attends to the content of X to a degree sufficient to make (a) true.

To see the picture behind D4, suppose God took my state of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* and wanted to make it access conscious. What would he have to do? According to D4, what he would have to do is (a) bring it about that I attend to *The Castafiore Emerald*; (b) bring it about that I am poised to do what I am merely disposed to do as result of seeing it; and finally (c) bring it about that my being poised in this way is a consequence of my attending to *The Castafiore Emerald*.

8. Unlike D2 and D3, D4 overcomes the modal objection. As we saw earlier, that objection is that being poised for rational control is not sufficient for consciousness of any sort, and so not for access consciousness. But D4 does not claim it *is* sufficient for consciousness; what is required in addition is a certain kind of attention. In particular, various questions in philosophy might be such

¹¹ Of course it might be that there are degrees of poise too, which would entail that access consciousness, like attention, comes in degree. I will not try to clarify this aspect of the issue in what follows.

¹² What does 'the content of X' mean? That will depend on what the nature of X is. Suppose X is state of seeing (or seeming to see) something, say a property or an object; then 'the content of X' can be given as an answer to the question 'what is seen?' or 'what do you seem to see?'. Likewise, if X is state of intending to do something, the content of X can be given as an answer to the question 'what is intended?'. (An issue here is whether it is possible to attend to something that does not exist; that is, whether 'attends' is an intensional transitive verb. If I see *The Castafiore Emerald*, I can certainly attend to it. But what if I merely seem to see it? Can I attend to it then? In my view, it is natural to answer than one can, in which case it does not follow from 'S attends to x' that x exists. Other might take a different view. In any case I will set aside this issue here.)

that I could easily turn my attention to them, but this does not make my thinking about those questions conscious, according to D4. What needs to happen in addition is that I *do* turn my attention to them, or rather, that I do to a sufficient extent that my thinking about them becomes poised to control rational thought and action.

D4 not only avoids the modal objection brought by Burge, it also avoids the similar objection brought by Atkinson and Davies. Take again their question “in virtue of what property of the pain in my leg is it the case that the content *I have a pain in my leg* is poised for rational control of my actions?” Atkinson and Davies say: “The intuitive folk psychological answer is that these dispositions are grounded in my pain’s being a phenomenally conscious state.” However, in the light of D4, it is mistaken to view this as *the* intuitive folk psychological answer. It might be that *an* intuitive folk psychological answer, but an equally intuitive answer is that the dispositions are grounded in the fact that I am not simply having a pain in the leg but am in addition attending to it. Attending to the pain in the leg will explain why I am poised in the way that I am.

That D4 avoids in this way the problem raised by Atkinson and Davies permits us to bring out a connection between it and something I mentioned at the outset, viz., Block’s pluralism, the idea that there are a number of different notions of consciousness. We have seen that according to D4, an access conscious state is one that meets a poise condition in a certain way, i.e. in virtue of attention. And we have also seen that D4 is intended to capture a strand in the ordinary notion of consciousness, a strand that deserves the name ‘access consciousness’. But none of this is to deny that a state might meet a poise condition in some *other* way, and that pointing this out might clarify the complex of different notions we have in mind when we talk about consciousness. To illustrate, compare D4 with two other potential definitions of access consciousness, one in terms of higher-order thought and one (in effect suggested by Atkinson and Davies) in terms of phenomenal consciousness:

D4-ho. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if and only if (a) X is poised for use by S in the rational control of S’s thought and action; (b) S knows or believes (in a certain way) that S is in X; (c) (a) is true because (b) is true.

D4-pc For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if and only if (a) X is poised for use by S in the rational control of S’s thought and action; (b) X is a phenomenally conscious state of S; and (c) (a) is true because (b) is true.

These proposals share with the D4 the suggestion that access consciousness is a matter of poise grounded in something; they just disagree on what that something is. Must a proponent of D4 reject them? It may initially seem so because it may seem that we here have competing accounts of what access consciousness is. On the other hand, if we accept a pluralist attitude to consciousness in general, there is no reason why we should not also accept a pluralist attitude to access consciousness in particular. From this point of view, there are various legitimate things one could mean by ‘access consciousness’. Our interest, it is true, is in D4, for that is the notion most clearly distinct from phenomenal and monitoring consciousness. But for all that there is no need to discredit these other notions.

9. While D4 avoids the modal objection, it nevertheless faces other objections. Here I will concentrate on four. The first objects to the fact that according to D4 attention is necessary for access consciousness. Christopher Mole, for example, discusses an example of William James’s in which a person is in a state that seems the ‘real opposite’ (in James’s words) of attention:

The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world meld into confused unity, the attention is dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time (1890; 382; quoted in Mole, 2011; 158, emphasis removed).

Mole argues with respect to this example that it should be read as a case in which one is in a conscious state and yet one is not attending to anything. If that were so, D4 would seem to be false.

But examples like this show at most that consciousness *of some sort* can occur without attention, and it does not follow that *access* consciousness can occur without attention. In the James example, phenomenal consciousness is certainly present; there is something it is like, after all, to surrender to the empty passing of time. Hence, if we agree that there is no attention in the case, we have a case of *phenomenal* consciousness without attention. But this is no threat to D4. D4 entails that attention is necessary for access consciousness, not that it is necessary for consciousness of any sort.

It might be thought one can strengthen the James example by considering a creature that has mental states but lacks the capacity for attention completely—couldn’t the creature have plenty of access conscious states?¹³ However, it is far from clear that this is so. First, it is not obvious that a creature can have mental states but no capacity at all for attention. We have so far said that

¹³ Thanks to Adam Pautz for raising this objection.

attention is a secondary psychological state in the sense that if one attends to something then one bears some other intentional relation to it; but it might also be true that if one bears any intentional relation to something then one must be able to attend to it at least to some degree. Second, even if a creature of this sort is possible, it is not clear that it has access conscious states in the sense at issue, i.e., as articulated by D4. It may of course be that the creature has states which are poised for rational control, but as we have seen this is not sufficient for access consciousness; perhaps the states are poised in virtue of being conscious in either the monitoring or the phenomenal sense, for example. But as we have just seen that is a different matter.

10. The second objection asks, not whether attention is necessary for access consciousness, but whether it is sufficient, i.e., why it is necessary to appeal, as D4 does, *both* to attention *and* to poise. To bring this out, contrast D4 with D5:

D5. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if and only if S attends to the content of X.¹⁴

D5 is simpler than D4 since it utilizes attention alone. Why then focus on the more complicated definition when apparently the simpler one will do?

The answer is that it will not do, or so at any rate it is plausible to think. Suppose it is possible for me to see *The Castafiore Emerald* unconsciously. For example, it might be the case that I see it and only afterwards realize that it was there on the floor and that I did see it; if so, when I saw it, I saw it unconsciously.¹⁵ To say that I saw it unconsciously does not preclude my attending to it. I may indeed have attended to it, so long as the attention in question is of a certain limited extent. However, if one can attend to something that one's sees without one's seeing of it being conscious, D5 is false. But D4 is not false, for D4 does not entail that attention alone is sufficient for consciousness.

Of course the possibility of attention without consciousness is controversial. Some writers take it to have been empirically demonstrated (e.g. Kentridge 2011), but others (e.g. Mole 2008) resist this suggestion claiming that the empirical demonstrations confuse awareness of one thing, an object, for awareness of something else, e.g., a location. Obviously the matter is difficult, and we will not resolve it here. Instead let me make two points. First, regardless of whether it has been

¹⁴ For a recent defence of the idea that attention is necessary and sufficient for consciousness, see Prinz 2011, though Prinz is concerned with phenomenal consciousness, not access consciousness. As indicated in footnote 1, I am interested in something much more modest.

¹⁵ Cases like this are discussed in Martin 1992 and Dretske 1981

empirically demonstrated, the possibility of attention without consciousness becomes more plausible when we bear in mind that attention is a matter of degree. If it is a matter of degree, it is possible to attend to *The Castafiore Emerald* to some minimal degree, and the degree in question might be intuitively below a threshold required for consciousness. Indeed this is precisely what D4 predicts, for what D4 predicts is that the threshold is marked by the notion of poise. Second, even if the true theories of attention and consciousness (whatever they are) entail that attention is sufficient for consciousness, there is still a sense in which D4 is preferable to D5. For there is a question that one could put to a proponent of D5, viz. *why* is it the case that attending to the content of a state makes the state access conscious? The answer will surely be that doing so makes the state poised to control rational action. If that is so, then D4 is preferable to D5 as a definition, regardless of the logical relations between attention and consciousness.¹⁶

11. The third objection against D4 begins from the point that attention itself might be a phenomenal notion. Declan Smithies (2011), for example, has recently argued that one can distinguish phenomenal attention and access attention, just as Block in 1995 distinguishes phenomenal and access consciousness. If Smithies is right, and if D4 utilizes the phenomenal notion, one might object that D4 defines access consciousness in terms of phenomenal consciousness.

But Smithies' claim that there is a distinctively phenomenal notion of attention is open to question. It is true of course that on occasion there is something it is like to attend to various things; for example, there is something it is like for me to attend to *The Castafiore Emerald*. But it is possible to accommodate this fact without saying that attention as such is phenomenal. As we saw earlier, attention is a secondary psychological state in the sense that I attend to x only to the extent that I already bear some sort of psychological relation to x, e.g. I believe x, or see x, or hope for x and so on. If that is so, attention will be phenomenal *only when* the associated primary state is phenomenal. In particular, if my seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* is a phenomenal state, as it might be, then my attending to *The Castafiore Emerald* on that occasion will likewise be phenomenal. On the other hand, if having a thought about philosophy is not a phenomenal state, as it might not be, then my attending to philosophy will likewise not be. Weaving this back into D4, if the state in question is a phenomenal state, then attention will be phenomenal, but it will not be true as a matter of definition that access consciousness is phenomenal.

¹⁶ One might again point out here that poise is a matter of degree too, and ask how much is required for access consciousness. However, as noted above, it is reasonable to suppose that access consciousness is itself a matter of degree as well, and hence that it may be vague when some state becomes access conscious. But as I noted I will not try to clarify this aspect of things here.

12. The final objection asks whether all of the proposals I have so far considered are one and all an overreaction. One immediate and very natural reaction to the modal objection points out that modal notions are famously slippery and therefore prone to produce fallacies of equivocation. To illustrate, imagine I am a drug enforcement officer who has just burst into the suspect's house. I don't know where the drugs are. But I am able to locate the drugs—e.g. by holding a gun to the suspect's head and screaming at him to tell me where they are, a technique which has proved very effective in the past. In such a case two things are on the face of it true: (a) I don't know where the drugs are; (b) I am able to locate the drugs. Does this refute (what we might call) the *ability theory* of knowing where the drugs are, according to which knowing where the drugs are *just is* being able to locate the drugs? Not so, or at any rate the proponent of this theory has a ready reply (which is not to say that the theory is true). The reply is that a person may be able to locate something in one sense without being able to locate it in another; for example, I am able to find the drugs in the sense that I can if I ask the suspect, but I am not able to find them in the sense that I can't if I do not. The ability theory—or says its proponent—employs the second sense of 'being able to locate the drugs', while the example employs the first.

Could a proponent of D2 not say something similar when confronted with the modal objection? Presumably the thought would be that in Burge's example the thoughts about philosophy are poised for rational control in one sense, and yet are not poised for rational control in another. If that were so, Burge's example would threaten D2. Indeed, if that were so, our entire discussion is premised on a mistake.

However, while in general it is a good idea to be suspicious of modal notions in this way, the objection to D2 cannot be brushed aside so easily. The problem is to specify the different senses of being poised. In particular, in what sense are the thoughts about philosophy not poised for rational control? It is tempting of course to answer: in the sense that entails that the thoughts are not access conscious; since they are not access conscious they are not poised for rational control. But to say that is to protect D2 at the cost of making it empty. For now it tells us that a state is access conscious if it is poised to control thought in the sense that entails it is access conscious. A different answer is that the thoughts are poised for rational control because they are phenomenally conscious or because I believe or know that I am in them. But as we have seen it is not clear that these conditions are met in the case. A more plausible suggestion is that the thoughts about philosophy are not poised for rational control in the sense that they are not poised in virtue of a certain kind of attention. To say that is quite plausible, but it is no different from advancing D4.

13. I have argued that D4 is preferable to D2 and D3 on the one hand, and to D5 on the other. We may bring our defence of D4 to a close by briefly asking how Burge, the philosopher who

presses the objection against D2 most forcefully, suggests that the proper account of access consciousness should go.

Burge does not try to provide a full account of what access consciousness is; such an account, he says, is yet to be given. What he does instead is provide several independent necessary conditions and sufficient conditions without suggesting that these features jointly constitute a definition. So what I will do in this section is consider these suggestions one by one, with a view both to their intrinsic plausibility and to their relation to our own account.

To begin with, the two necessary conditions, as I understand them, are these:

- (1) For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state only if: X is poised for use in the rational control of thought and action
- (2) For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state only if: S instantiates some states (not X necessarily) which are phenomenally conscious.¹⁷

That Burge advances the first of these two necessary conditions shows that he accepts the idea of poise as a necessary condition; he simply does not accept it as a sufficient condition. This is an important point for us, for it suggests that D4 is on the right track in not getting rid of poise altogether. That the philosopher who did most to change Block's mind about poise does not, like Block, give up the notion of poise makes one think that Block's own response to the modal problem is an overreaction.

The second of these suggested necessary conditions indicates Burge's commitment to the idea that phenomenal consciousness is necessary for any sort of consciousness.¹⁸ His idea is that if an individual has conscious states of any sort—access conscious or higher-order conscious—then there is some phenomenal conscious state that he or she has (though the states in question may well be distinct). Construed as a speculation about the form that consciousness takes in human beings, this is I think quite plausible. An important feature of paradigmatic phenomenally conscious states is that they involve the body in important and difficult to spell out ways, either through sensory organs or through bodily sensations. Since we are embodied organic creatures, it is natural to think

¹⁷ As regards (1) Burge writes "being poised for use in rational activity is a not a sufficient condition for it, only a necessary condition (2007, 386). As regards (2) he says: "Phenomenal consciousness need not be part of a thought or of its articulation in order for the thought to be rational-access conscious. But there must be some phenomenal consciousness—some sensed or imaged what-it-is-like quality—in the individual for a thought to count as conscious in any sense...I do not know how to defend this view. I do not know how it is true. But despite a literature replete with assumptions to the contrary I find it compelling" (2007, 386).

¹⁸ As Snowdon 2010 has recently noted, this commitment is present even in Nagel 1974.

that the form of consciousness (and the form of rationality) that we instantiate will be intertwined with phenomenal consciousness in this sense. However, it is doubtful that one should build this into a definition of access consciousness (though it is also not clear to me that Burge is suggesting it should be). For one thing, embodiment seems to be only contingently associated with being conscious. For another thing, Burge does not deny that there are access conscious states which are not phenomenally conscious—why then should not those states exist in a being who lacks phenomenally conscious states altogether? So it would seem to me that (2) above, while perhaps true in some sense, should not be thought of as part of the definition of access, or indeed any sort, of consciousness.

In addition to proposing these two necessary conditions, as I read him Burge also proposes two sufficient conditions, as follows:

- (3) For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if X involves phenomenal elements.
- (4) For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is an access conscious state if X under direct rational control.¹⁹

In regard to the first of these, it is unclear to me why one should suppose that being a state that involves phenomenal elements is sufficient for being in an access conscious state, and indeed I find Burge's apparent suggestion to this effect a bit puzzling. Take the state of my seeing *The Castafiore Emerald*. Such a state is phenomenally conscious—or so I am assuming. But it does not follow that it is access-conscious. Indeed, this is part of the point of drawing the access/phenomenal distinction, which makes Burge's suggestion here difficult to understand.

With regard to the second of these, it is in my view plausible that if something is under direct rational control, then it is access consciousness. Suppose I focus on some philosophical thesis and wonder whether some other thesis follows from it. I might directly and deliberately construct a case in which the first is true but the second is not, thus arriving at the view that the second thesis does not follow from the first. In such a case it is plausible to suppose that the philosophical thoughts are indeed access conscious. However, while this is the case, one might go on to ask *what it is about* control that is making these states access consciousness. A plausible suggestion is that what is important here is that control brings with it attention of a certain sort, i.e. of a sort sufficient for poise. But if that so, then two points can be made. First, if control is sufficient, that it is

¹⁹ As regards (3), Burge writes “thoughts type-individuated partly in terms of phenomenal elements, at least when these elements are phenomenally conscious, form one subclass of rational-access thoughts” (2007, 387). As regards (4) he writes: “Occurrently exercised, direct control of thoughts, at least by an individual who is phenomenally conscious while doing so, seems to imply the thoughts are conscious” (2007, 394).

because attention of a certain sort is sufficient. So Burge's suggestion about control seems again to dovetail closely with our own. Second, if the reason that control is sufficient is that attention of a certain sort is sufficient, then we have a natural extension of what Burge says to cases that are not under deliberate control. As we have seen, while attention need not be a matter of the will, control in Burge's sense appears to be.

One might summarize this brief engagement with Burge by saying that D4 is sympathetic to what I take to be the main thrust of Burge's discussion, while at the same time setting aside factors that seem to be extraneous or unnecessary. I accept, with Burge and against Block, that poise is necessary for access consciousness. I do not accept the claim that the fundamentality of phenomenal consciousness with respect to other sorts of consciousness is part of the definition of access consciousness, but I am open-minded about whether it is true. I do not accept that a state's being phenomenally conscious is sufficient for its being access conscious—in fact Burge's suggestion to the contrary seems somewhat puzzling. And finally, while I accept that control of the sort Burge has in mind is sufficient for access consciousness, I would add that this is only the case because the control involves attention of a certain sort.

14. My focus throughout has been on the notion of access consciousness. But I have so far largely avoided what is for most people the main issue, viz., the relation of access consciousness to phenomenal consciousness, or as Block tends to put it in recent work, the relation of phenomenology and accessibility. In the remainder of the paper, I want to briefly take up one strand in this complicated issue, though as before I will continue to adopt the older terminology.

Block himself claims he can't define phenomenal consciousness, and instead can only point to it using phrases like 'what it is like'. I think he is underselling himself. It is true that one can't define phenomenal consciousness *reductively* but, as I noted in footnote 4, this does not mean that one can't define it in some sense or other. In particular, it is possible to provide a Nagel-inspired definition of phenomenal consciousness as follows:

D6. For any subject S and any psychological state X of S, X is a phenomenally conscious state if and only if there is something it is like for S to be in X.

If phenomenal consciousness is defined in this modest way and access consciousness is defined in terms of D4, it is extremely plausible that these are different from a definitional point of view. Phenomenal consciousness focuses on *how the subject is* when he or she is in the state. Access consciousness focuses on *what the subject attends to* (and to what degree) when he or she is in the state. In that sense, we have clearly two notions here.

In the light of the fact that we have two definitions here, we have one way to clarify an idea I have mentioned positively on several occasions but have not examined: Block's pluralism about consciousness. According to this idea, a pluralist position about consciousness is that there is a plurality of distinct definitions of consciousness. Of course, we so far considered only a few such definitions—D6 and D4 in particular—but it is plausible that, once the full panoply of notions is set out (self-consciousness, introspective consciousness, etc.) we will have a plurality of distinct definitions of consciousness in a much more full-blooded sense, just as Block suggests.

15. Suppose we agree that there is a plurality of distinct definitions of consciousness; then the issue becomes what the principles are that constrain their connection. For it *is* plausible that there are some connections here. It is not after all a completely random matter that if a person is in a phenomenally conscious state, they are in an access-conscious state. What then are the connections?

This is certainly a multi-faceted issue. For one thing, as we have emphasized, that two things are distinct from a definitional point of view does not rule out that they will be connected, even modally or a priori connected, in other ways. Dealing with this issue in detail however is not something I can attempt here. Rather I will concentrate on one line of argument—I will call *the emphatic argument*, because it works by placing emphasis on a particular part of the definition of phenomenal consciousness—which aims to show that there is a necessary connection between phenomenal and access consciousness; that is, necessarily, if a person is in an access conscious state, they are in a phenomenally conscious state.

The first premise of the emphatic argument is that if—to return to our main example—the state of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* is phenomenally conscious, then there is something it is like *for me* to see it (emphasis added to 'for me'). The second premise is that that if there is something it is like for me to see *The Castafiore Emerald*, the state of seeing it is—in some sense—accessible to me. The conclusion is that that if this state is phenomenally conscious then it is accessible to me, and more generally that it is impossible for me to be in a phenomenally conscious state without its being accessible to me. If we assume that the notion of access here is associated with access consciousness, the conclusion of the argument entails that it is impossible to be in a phenomenally conscious state without being in an access conscious state.

This emphatic argument is lying behind a number of otherwise different proposals in the literature on consciousness, and can be developed in a number of ways. Here is Jennifer Church, for example, appealing to the argument in a prominent attempt to undermine Block's distinction between access-consciousness and phenomenal-consciousness:

... there cannot be “something it is like” to be in that state...unless it is a certain way for or to a subject. Which is to say, for a state to have a phenomenal property it must stand in a particular relation to the subject of the state. But assuming that we have done away with the Cartesian idea of an insubstantial or homuncular self, a state can stand in some relation to a subject in that state only if it stands in some relation(s) to various other states of the subject....[But] if...one accepts that phenomenal properties are relational properties, it seems plausible to suppose that that the relevant relations are some sort of access relations...since these are just the connections that shape an organism into a subject. (1997, p.425).

A second and more recent example of appeal to the emphatic argument is Josh Weisberg’s recent defence of what he calls an ‘extrinsic’ view of consciousness, which is in effect a theory according to which phenomenal consciousness is reduced to a particular sort of higher-order or representational state. Weisberg writes:

Supporters of an extrinsic concept, on the other hand, focus on the “for the organism” in the “something it’s like for the organism.” This suggests a connection to the rest of the mind, a mode of access by a sentient subject. This connection might be cashed out in causal, functional, or representational terms, but it is the connection that matters, not the intrinsic nature of the states involved. (2011, 411)

In both of these cases, the notion of ‘for me’ is emphasized to indicate that if a state is phenomenally conscious, then there must be some sort of access that the subject bears to the state. In consequence there is a necessary connection between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness.

16. However, while the emphatic argument is popular, it is also subject to two major objections. The first is that the argument confuses representational or informational relations with explanatory ones. It is true of course that there is something it is like for me to see *The Castafiore Emerald*. This much follows immediately from the point that the state of seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* is a phenomenally conscious state, together with D6 above. But what is it to say that there is something it is like for me to see *The Castafiore Emerald*? Actually, this is a complicated matter—for one thing, it depends on the correct semantic treatment of ‘what it is like’-sentences²⁰—but my own view is

²⁰ For a fuller treatment of this issue, see Stoljar (MS)

that to say that there is something it is like to see *The Castafiore Emerald* is (roughly) to say that my seeing it affects me in a particular way, viz. doing so makes me feel a certain way or makes things seem to me a certain way. In other words, the ‘what it is like’ claim introduces three distinct elements: my seeing the book, the way that I am, and the explanatory relation (‘affects’) that holds between my seeing the book and the way that I am when I do so. To say this is not to offer a reductive analysis of any of these three elements. In particular, it may be that the distinctive way that I am could not be captured without using language like ‘feels’ or ‘seems’. Nor is it to deny something present in the quotations from both Church and Weisberg, viz., that the way that I am has an impact on my wider psychology. What it does mean, however, is that there is nothing in D6 or in ‘what it is like’-sentences more broadly to indicate what Weisberg calls a “mode of access by a sentient subject” at least if this mode of access is to supposed to hold between me and my seeing of the book. Certainly it does not follow from the fact that there is a way that I am in virtue of my seeing the book that my seeing the book is accessible to me.

Moreover—and here is the second reason why the argument fails—even if we agree that there is a way in which my seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* is accessible to me, it does not follow that the state is access consciousness in the sense we have defined, that is, in the sense of D4. According to D4, what must be the case if my seeing *The Castafiore Emerald* is access consciousness is not simply that I am disposed to do various things in virtue of seeing it—as we have seen, that suggestion would entail that almost any state is access conscious. What is required in addition is that that I attend to the *The Castafiore Emerald* in a way that makes me poised to do the things I am disposed to do anyway, i.e. simply in virtue of seeing it. But even if the state is accessible to me in some sense or other, it does not follow that it is accessible to me *in this sense*. So the emphatic argument fails, not simply because it employs the wrong analysis of ‘what it is like’-sentences, but because it employs the wrong analysis of access consciousness.

17. Of course, to establish that an argument is unsound is not to remove its appeal. And indeed it is striking that the emphatic argument has been appealed to in many different ways over the years. What then is lying behind it? I think there are a number of possibilities here. One is that, while the argument is fallacious, its conclusion is plausible, and there is a metaphysically necessary connection between access and phenomenal consciousness. Another is that while there is no connection between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness, there is nevertheless a second and more primitive or pre-conceptual notion of access that is indeed closely bound up with phenomenal consciousness. A third is that that while the connection between access and phenomenal consciousness might be metaphysically contingent and subject to empirical counterexamples, it is also a mistake to suppose that it is not fairly tightly constrained in this sense:

in rational and conscious beings such as us, it is normally the case that phenomenally conscious states are access conscious states, even if that is not always true.

In my view it is the third of these suggestions that has most to recommend it. The problem with the first is that Block's arguments for metaphysical contingency and indeed empirical contingency seems quite compelling and as we have seen are not ruled out by the definitions of the notions. The problem with the second is that it is quite unclear what this primitive form of awareness is—in what sense is it awareness, for example, and in what sense is it primitive?—nor is it clear how we could extract it from phenomenal consciousness. However, if we agree that the third possibility has the most to recommend it, we are left with a major project in both in philosophy and science: to chart the relations between the different notions of consciousness, accepting that there is probably no pithy summary of what these connections are. Such a project is an exciting one but it is not something I can embark on here.

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