

## **Content and the Stream of Consciousness**

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Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as ‘chain’ or ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instant. It is nothing jointed: it flows. A ‘river’ or a ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. (James 1890, p. 233).

I want to call your attention to the discontinuous character of thought – the complete inappropriateness of James’ expression ‘the stream of thought’.  
(Geach 1969, p. 34)

Philosophical debates over the differences between thought and experience have arisen in a number of different contexts, and there have been both theories of thought and theories of the sensory that have been criticised for failing to respect these differences. One such debate that is not much discussed now, arose when Geach objected to William James’ notion of the ‘stream’ of thought. Geach argued that although sensory processes and events may be stream-like, there can be no stream of conscious thought.

Geach’s argument offers what I think is an interesting angle on the question of the differences between, and the relations between, the cognitive and the sensory. The question of what it is for an aspect of mind to be ‘stream-like’ connects with debates

in the ontology of mind – in particular debates concerned with how the temporal features of an aspect of mind, the way in which it fills time, may be relevant to its ontological category. In what follows I shall be suggesting that these matters are also relevant to current debates about perceptual experience that are now framed in terms of the relation between content and phenomenal character. Before getting to that proposal I offer a reconstruction of Geach's argument against the Jamesian notion of a stream of thought.

### **Geach on Judgement**

In Mental Acts Geach presents an argument for the claim that the mental act of judging lacks duration, which appeals, in part, to the claim that acts of thinking thoughts are individuated by their propositional contents. He uses this as part of a more general argument for the claim that (a) there is no succession within any act of thinking a thought and the claim that (b) there is no gradual transition from one act of thinking a thought to another. As we will see, it is claims (a) and (b) that Geach appeals to in support of the claim that, contra James, there is no stream of conscious thought. First, though, to Geach's argument for the claim that mental act of judging is an event that lacks duration.

In Mental Acts Geach writes,

Spoken words last so long in physical time... – one could sensibly say that the utterance of the words was simultaneous with the movement of a body... from one place to another. The same would go for the duration of mental images of words, or any other mental images...

With a thought it is quite different. Even if we accepted the view... that a judgement is a complex of Ideas, we could hardly suppose that in a thought the

Ideas occur successively, as the words do in a sentence; it seems reasonable to say that unless the whole complex content is grasped all together - unless the Ideas ... are all simultaneously present - the thought or judgement just does not exist at all. (p. 104)

Geach argues that the mental act of judging is individuated by its propositional content. Such contents are complex in structure, so in a sense have parts, or elements, but, according to Geach the elements of the content of a mental act are not, and do not signify, temporal parts of the mental act they individuate.

Even if a thought has a complex content, this does not mean that the elements in this complex can occur separately and successively (Geach 1969, p. 34).

The thought that the pack of cards is on the table occurs all at once or not at all... (What kind of ideas the contrary view leads to may be seen from William James' fantasy: that the thought lasts for the whole time of the sentence 'the pack of cards is on the table', and goes through successive phases, in which bits of the thought corresponding to the successive words are prominent – including bits corresponding to 'the' and 'of'). (Anscombe and Geach 1961, p. 96)

The general lesson here is that if we are individuating an aspect of mind with successive phases by reference to its propositional content, then the fact that it is an aspect of mind with successive phases that we are individuating, cannot be captured in the content we use to individuate it.<sup>1</sup> In God and the Soul, Geach writes, "I think

Norman Malcolm was right when he said that a mental image could be before one's mind's eye for just as long as a beetle took to crawl across a table... but I think it would be nonsense to say that I 'was thinking' a given thought for the period of a beetle's crawl – the continuous past of 'think' has no such use. (The White Knight 'was thinking' of a plan in that he thought certain thoughts successively; and for each individual thought 'was thinking' would have no application.)” (p. 64).

Why should a consideration as to whether the continuous past of the verb has any such use be relevant to Geach's argument? Discussions concerning linguistic aspect, largely influenced by Vendler's classifications of verbs into the categories of state, achievement, activity and accomplishment, are useful in assessing this part of the argument.<sup>2</sup> Rothstein (2004) offers the following rough approximation of the distinctions Vendler draws between these categories of verbs: “Crudely, states are non-dynamic situations, such as be happy or believe; activities are open ended processes, such as run; achievements are near-instantaneous events which are over as soon as they have begun, such as notice; and accomplishments are processes which have a natural endpoint, such as read the book” (p. 6).

Neither states (believes, loves) nor achievements (recognise, notice) usually occur in the progressive, whereas activities (walking, eating) and accomplishments (building a house, walking to the shops) do. The latter pair can be answers to the question 'what are you doing?', whereas the former pair cannot. Verb predicates that fall under the category of state do not usually occur in the progressive, as the situations they signify do not unfold over time in the way that activities and accomplishments do. States obtain for periods of time. They do not have temporal parts. Achievements do not take the progressive either. This is not because they signify situations that occupy time in the way that states do, but rather because they

relate to things that can happen instantaneously. Things one can have done or will do, but not things one can be in the process of doing. Although accomplishments are like activities, in so far as they take the progressive, they are unlike activities, in so far as they have a terminus. Accomplishments are movements towards an endpoint, where the properties of the endpoint are determined by the description of the occurrence.

Returning to Geach's argument, so far we have Geach's observations about the notion of content with which an act of judging is individuated. This simply gets us the idea that the content of an aspect of mind that is used to individuate that aspect of mind is neutral on the question of whether the aspect of mind so individuated is an achievement, state, activity, or accomplishment – even if that content concerns, say, an accomplishment or an activity etc. If Geach is right to claim that 'judge that *p*' does not occur in the progressive, this would then suggest that the phrase picks out a state or an achievement. There is a use of the verb 'judge' that picks out the mental state of belief ('S judges that *p*'). So where the verb is used to pick out a mental event, the indications are that we should regard it as picking out an achievement – an instantaneous event that lacks duration. If this is right, then it is worth pausing to consider the question of what it is that makes the mental act of judging suited to be picked about by an achievement verb.

Why not regard 'judging that *p*' as an accomplishment? Achievements are events that are instantaneous changes to states. Accomplishments are events that have internal structure, which have temporal parts, but which have a terminus. So why regard acts of judging as events that are changes to states, rather than events with internal temporal structure that have a terminus? One reason for thinking that a subject is in the process of  $\Phi$ -ing, where  $\Phi$ -ing is an accomplishment, is the fact that the subject is doing something *X* with the intention of reaching a certain kind of

terminus. In this respect the process can have started but not yet reached its terminus. But this explanation cannot apply to the case of judging, for having an intention to judge that p seems to make the actual act of judging redundant.<sup>3</sup> If judging were an accomplishment, it should be possible to stop S halfway through his act of judging. It should be possible for there to be a situation in which it was not yet true that the subject had judged that p, but in which it was true that he had started judging that p. However, here we might ask, what could the subject have done that counted as starting the act of judging, and what else would he have needed to do in order to finish his judging? If we think of the content of the act of judging as having parts that signify the temporal parts of the act, then this would perhaps provide us with an answer. But Geach's observation is that we should not regard the propositional content of an aspect of mind in this way. We can think of the content as having a structure, and so as having structural parts, but these structural parts do not signify the temporal parts of the aspect of mind they individuate. To borrow O'Shaughnessy's analogy, an act of judging is not like putting together the discrete parts of a jigsaw, and neither is it like an artist making preliminary sketches of the final work.<sup>4</sup>

Now let's consider the question of why it is that the mental act of judging that p should not be regarded as an activity. The mere fact that it is individuated in terms of some propositional content cannot in itself do all the work. For what about imagining / supposing that p? For example: 'I'm imagining that there is a beetle in that box' is an activity – an activity that is individuated by some propositional content. Why should we regard this as an activity and not an achievement, in contrast to the case of judging?

Unlike judging that p, imagining that p is something one can intend to do, and it is an activity one can intend to engage in for a period of time. So it is not simply

marking some change in state.<sup>5</sup> There is something one needs to be doing (there needs to occur some process with temporal parts, with duration) in order for it to be true that one is imagining that p.<sup>6</sup> One must be either perceptually imagining (say, a beetle in the box), or in a case where perceptual imagination is not involved (what I shall call purely propositional imagining<sup>7</sup>) one must be doing something under the self-imposed constraint of regarding p as true.<sup>8</sup> That is to say, one cannot engage in the activity of imagining that p, where this is a case of purely propositional imagining, without doing anything else.<sup>9</sup> In the case of judging that p, the state with propositional content that is acquired (belief) is not one whose obtaining requires the doing of anything. This is why we have an activity verb that is related to the state that obtains when a subject is imagining that p, but we do not have an activity verb that is related to the state that obtains when a subject believes that p. Here one might say that, in contrast to the act of imagining that p, as soon as one has judged that p, the act has served its purpose, the state has been acquired, and one doesn't need to continue doing anything in order to ensure the continued obtaining of the state.

All of this points to the conclusion that 'judge that p' is an achievement, and a plausible account of what it is that an achievement picks out is that it is used to mark an instantaneous event that is some kind of change of state. Hence the conclusion that the mental act of judging lacks duration.<sup>10</sup> This then leads us to the claim that an act of judging is an instantaneous event with no internal structure, but where the state it is a change to is individuated by something that has structure – namely its propositional content. We should not be misled into thinking that the structure of the propositional content of the state that is referred to in individuating this instantaneous event has anything to do with the event's internal temporal structure, and neither should we be misled into thinking that the propositional content of the state is related to the state's

internal temporal structure, given that the state is non-dynamic and so doesn't have temporal parts.<sup>11</sup>

We are now in a position to begin to assess Geach's claim that, contra James, there is no conscious stream of thought. Geach argues that (a) there is no succession within any one mental act of thinking a thought, and (b) there is no gradual transition from one act of thinking a thought to another, and according to Geach (a) and (b) are in conflict with William James' notion of the 'stream of thought'. We have now seen, at least in the case of judging that *p*, what leads Geach to claim that there is no succession within an act of thinking the thought. To make further progress on the question of why Geach thinks there is no conscious stream of thought we need to turn to the question of why he might think that (a) and (b) are together in conflict with the notion of the Jamesian stream of conscious thought. What assumptions are being made here about the nature of the stream of consciousness? In particular, what assumptions are being made about the ontological profile of those aspects of mind that constitute the stream of consciousness?<sup>12</sup> Here I think it helps to turn to O'Shaughnessy's remarks on the stream of consciousness in his Consciousness and the World.

### **Continuities in the Jamesian Stream of Consciousness**

O'Shaughnessy writes, "The stream of consciousness is such as to necessitate the occurrence of processes and events at all times. It is not the mere existence of flux that is distinctive, but the necessity of flux. Whatever endures necessarily does so processively." (2000, p. 44). O'Shaughnessy uses the term 'experience' to pick out those aspects of mind that make up the stream of consciousness, and, according to O'Shaughnessy, "experiences are essentially in a condition of flux. What this means

is that all experiences of necessity happen or occur or are going on: in a word are either events, or processes or both.” Experiences are, then, to be contrasted with mental states. Experience is “occurrent to the core” (p. 49), whereas mental states are not happenings. Their continuity is, by contrast, non-processive.

Even when experience does not change in type or content it still changes in another respect: it is constantly renewed, a new sector of itself is then and there taking place. This is because experiences are events or processes, and each momentary new element of any given experience is a further happening or occurrence (by contrast with (say) the steady continuation through time of one’s knowing that 9 and 5 make 14). (p. 42)

The continuation of the knowledge that 9 and 5 make 14 does not as much as necessitate the occurrence of anything... it is not for an extended event of knowing to have occurred. Rather a state of knowing endured for that time. (p. 44)

Mental states obtain for periods of time, but they do not go on, nor are they undergone, for periods of time. Implicit in the metaphor of the stream of consciousness is the idea that aspects of mind that make up the stream must unfold over time in a way that mental states, like belief, do not.<sup>13</sup> So if a mental act of judging is an achievement, an instantaneous mental event that is the acquisition of a belief, and the belief is a mental state, then a series of such instantaneous events (judgements) and mental states (beliefs) cannot, in itself, constitute a Jamesian stream of thought. I take it that Geach thinks that a stream of thought requires (a) succession

within an act of thinking a thought and / or (b) the gradual transition from thought to another, because he assumes that a stream of thought would have to be constituted by the occurrence of unfolding, processive aspects of mind.

Here Geach may be open to the objection that we can make sense of ‘the gradual transition from one thought to another’, if the term ‘thought’ is being used to refer to a mental state, rather than the content of a mental state. However, O’Shaughnessy makes a further, and important, qualification regarding the ontological profile of ‘experiences’, those aspects of mind that make up the stream of consciousness, and this qualification can be used to respond to the objection on Geach’s behalf.

According to O’Shaughnessy, experiences are processive in character, and what is more, they are not processes that are analysable in terms of states and events that are changes to those states, hence the claim that they are “occurrent to the core”. As O’Shaughnessy notes, “processes can occur in the non-experiencing sector of the mind”. For, as he puts it, “states are not immutable”. States can change and this change can take gradual and continual form. Take, for example, a case of forgetting that happens gradually and continuously, or a case in which one’s degree of belief in a proposition changes gradually and continually, as one becomes more and more convinced of something. To specify a non-experiential psychological process the recipe is one of specifying a psychological state, posit an event consisting in change in that state, and posit continuity as the mode in which change is realised. Such processes, although they unfold over time, are not elements in the Jamesian stream. They are not experiences, for experiences are not analysable as a series of continual and gradual changes to states. When experience does not change in type or content, it is still, nonetheless, processive in character. The fact that an experience does not

change in type and content does not entail that there need be any gap in the stream of consciousness. According to O'Shaughnessy, "No experiences are states. None can be and of necessity". He asks, "If states are not experiences, how can there be a state whose continuous change constitutes experiential process?" (p. 47). And so he concludes, "Experiences cannot be constituted out of psychological states". So the 'gradual transition from one thought to another', understood as a process analysable as a gradual change in state, will not in itself amount to a process that is an element in the stream of consciousness.

So far we simply have an argument for the claim that if a mental act of judging is an achievement, an instantaneous mental event that is the acquisition of a belief, and the belief is a mental state, then a series of such instantaneous events (judgements) and mental states (beliefs) cannot, in itself, constitute a Jamesian stream of thought. However, given that not all acts of thinking thoughts are judgings, what warrants the generalising move to the claim that there is no stream of conscious thought at all? For example, as has already been noted, imagining that p and supposing that p seem to be activities and not achievements. And what of thinking about p, or calculating whether p?

Here O'Shaughnessy's qualification regarding the ontological profile of those aspects of mind that make up the stream of consciousness becomes relevant again. If we have a case in which a subject is calculating whether p, then there may occur a mental process culminating in the subject's judging that p, so his calculating whether p is a process, but this process will not amount to a conscious stream of thought if it is analysable in terms of the notions of mental states and events that are analysable as changes to /acquisitions of those states, and we have not yet seen any reason to think that it is not analysable in this way. Similarly, it could be argued that in the case of

purely propositional imagining (that is where the subject's imagining that p / supposing that p does not involve perceptual imagination) we also have a process that appears to be analysable in this way. We call the whole process one of imagining / supposing that p, because when a subject imagines / supposes that p the ensuing activity is performed under the self-imposed constraint of regarding p as true.

For Geach, we only have aspects of mind with an ontological profile suited to constitute a stream of consciousness when sensory episodes or processes are involved – perceptual experience, sensation, perceptual imagination and perceptual memory – and so Geach thinks there can be no stream of conscious thought because he thinks that this would involve a commitment to the mistaken idea that “to think certain thoughts is to have certain mental images, feelings, unspoken words etc., passing through one's mind” (1969, p. 34).

It is notable that the aspects of mind that Geach thinks suited to feature in the stream of consciousness are those aspects of mind that we usually think of as phenomenally conscious – those aspects of mind that many think are individuated, at least in part, in terms of their phenomenal character. This might then invite the following suggestion, which I think is worth exploring: What is distinctive of these phenomenally conscious aspects of mind is the fact that they have an ontological profile that makes them suited to feature in the stream of consciousness. If one were to think that a creature is phenomenally conscious only if his mental life includes a stream of consciousness, then O'Shaughnessy's account provides one with a clearer sense of what must be lacking in a creature that lacks phenomenal consciousness. Namely aspects of mind of the appropriate ontological category – that is, mental continuities that are processive in character, but which are not analysable as continual changes to (or in) states.

An obvious objection to this proposal is the thought that we surely want to allow that some of our mental states are phenomenally conscious. According to O'Shaughnessy, mental states obtain for periods of time. They do not unfold over time, they are not processive in character, and so, according to O'Shaughnessy's suggestion, this means they do not have an ontological profile that makes them suited to feature in the stream of consciousness. If the phenomenally conscious aspects of mind are those that feature in the stream of consciousness, then this in turn suggests that there are no phenomenally conscious mental states. And surely this can't be right.

I shall be suggesting in what follows that the appropriate response to this is relevant to uncovering what is going in certain debates concerned with the relation between representational content and phenomenal character. I shall start by focusing on representational theories of perceptual experience. In particular I turn to the question of the ontological category of the aspect of mind that is individuated when we individuate perceptual experiences in terms of their representational contents.

### **Representational Theories of Perceptual Experience**

I suggested that the general lesson to be learnt from Geach's remarks about aspects of mind individuated in terms of their propositional contents is that although we can think of such content as having structure, and so as being something that can be said to have parts or elements, it would be a mistake to think that these parts, or elements, either are, or signify, the temporal parts of the aspect of mind the propositional content individuates. This appears to apply to any representational content that we understand in terms of the notion of satisfaction conditions, or correctness conditions, whether or not we think of that representational content as conceptual. So the first part of Geach's argument applies straightforwardly to the case

of perceptual experience, if we think of perceptual experiences as aspects of mind individuated by their representational contents.<sup>14</sup> So, for example, if the perceptual aspects of mind we individuate in terms of their representational contents have temporal parts, and unfold over time, this is not something we can capture in the content we use to individuate them. What about the kind of verb we use when we individuate a perceptual experience in terms of its content?

Let's start by making use of the Vendlerian categories of verb-predicates that were invoked in the discussion of the mental act of judging. Should we regard the perceptual / experiential aspects of mind that are individuated in terms of their representational contents as states, accomplishments, activities, or achievements? When we talk of a perceptual experience individuated in terms its representational content it seems clear that we are talking about an aspect of mind with duration. We can say of a subject, S, that from t1 to tn it (visually) seemed to S that p. Presumably then, they are not achievements. So are they activities, accomplishments or states? 'It seems to S that p', 'it appears to S that p' or 'it looks to S that p' are the usual kinds of locution used by those who think of perceptual experiences as aspects of mind individuated by their contents. Such verb phrases don't seem to be accomplishments.<sup>15</sup> 'It seemed to S that p' takes the temporal modifier for a time, not in a time. So if they are not achievements or accomplishments, are they states or activities? Well note that the use of continuous / progressive tense seems inappropriate here. We do not say, for example, 'it is / was seeming to S that p', or 'it is / was looking to S that p'. This would then suggest that such phrases pick out mental states. Also, statives, in the simple present, have a non-frequentive, non-habitual reading, and this also seems to be the case with the verbs used to pick out experiences individuated in terms of representational content.<sup>16</sup>

All of this suggests that the perceptual aspects of mind that we individuate in terms of their representational contents are mental states, and not events or processes. However, there is of course a simple rejoinder to this suggestion. We can say ‘S was having an experience such that it seemed to him that p’ and here it looks as though we are picking out an unfolding occurrence in terms of its representational content. Or rather, on closer consideration, it appears as though we are individuating an unfolding perceptual occurrence in terms of some relation it bears to some perceptual mental state with the representational content that p – i.e. the mental state picked out by the phrase ‘it seemed to S that p’. Implicit in this suggestion is an assumption about the kind of relation that can obtain between an event, or process, and a state, which I now want to examine in more detail.

### **State, Occurrence and Occurrent State**

The suggestion is that when we say ‘S was having an experience such that it seemed to him that p’, we are picking out an unfolding perceptual occurrence in terms of some mental state with the representational content that p that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of that unfolding perceptual occurrence. What I have in mind in talking of a state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of some event (or process) is not one in which the event in question is simply to be thought of as the causal antecedent of the obtaining of the state. Rather, in the cases I have in mind, the state obtains for a given period of time only if certain kinds of events are occurring during that period of time. In the non-mental domain it seems we can make sense of the idea that an event (or series of events) involving an object can amount to that object being modified in some way or other. In such a case the object is in its modified state while, and because, the event occurs, hence the idea that some state of the object (the way in

which it is modified) obtains in virtue of, and for the duration of, the occurrence of the event. For example, we think that the temperature of a liquid (state of the liquid) depends upon the motion of the molecules of the liquid (event).<sup>17</sup>

In the example of the connection between the temperature of a liquid and the motion of its molecules, there is a necessary connection between the obtaining of a state of the liquid (its temperature) and the occurrence of events involving that liquid (the motion of its molecules) – a certain kind of state obtains if and only if events of a given kind occur. The necessary connection here is one that is not knowable a priori. It is an empirical discovery. There are further cases in which the obtaining of a state requires the occurrence of events, there is a necessary connection between the state that obtains and the kind of event that is required for its obtaining, and one that is knowable a priori. In certain cases we know a priori that the state obtains only if there occurs some event or process, for we must mention the occurrence when we specify the state. For example, in a case where S is aware of x  $\Phi$ -ing, we know a priori that this state of ‘awareness of’ obtains only if x is  $\Phi$ -ing.

Rothstein makes the following two claims about states: (i) we cannot identify stages in the development of a state, and (ii) no change necessarily takes place while a state holds.<sup>18</sup> The fact that certain states obtain only if certain events occur shows why the second claim doesn’t follow from the first. It can also be used to show why Rothstein is wrong to claim that all states, unlike activities and accomplishments, have the distinctive feature of being homogeneous down to instants, and this is relevant to certain puzzles that arise concerning the perception of change and motion, as I shall now explain.

It has been suggested that accomplishments, unlike activities, are subject to what has been called ‘the imperfective paradox’. If  $\Phi$ -ing is an accomplishment (e.g.

walking to the shop), then the truth of ‘S was  $\Phi$ ing from t1 to t10’ does not entail that at t5 S  $\Phi$ -ed.<sup>19</sup> The suggestion is that in this respect accomplishments can be contrasted with activities: Where  $\Phi$ -ing is an activity, if it is true that S was  $\Phi$ -ing from t1 to t10 (e.g. walking), then at every point during that interval it is true that S  $\Phi$ -ed. Taylor and Dowty have raised the following objection to this claim: Although activities are cumulative, they are not homogeneous down to instants, and so as it turns out, in the case of activities, the truth of ‘S was  $\Phi$ -ing from t1 to t10’ need not entail that at t2 that S  $\Phi$ -ed. For it to be true that S  $\Phi$ -ed there must have occurred some ‘minimal’ event relevant to that activity. E.g. the fact that a subject has moved his foot from the ground does not in itself make it true that the subject has walked. Perhaps two steps are required for a walking to have occurred.

This leads Rothstein to claim that only states are unqualifiedly homogeneous as only states are homogeneous down to instants: “If John loved Mary for twenty years then he loved her at each instant during that twenty year period, and there is in principle no sub-part of that period which is too small to contain an event which will verify John loves Mary” (2004, p. 14). Now apply this claim to what appears to be a stative: ‘being aware of’. If from t1 to tn S was aware of O, then it should be true that at each instant during that interval of time S had been aware of O. The thought that the state of ‘awareness of’ is homogeneous down to instants can then lead to the following assumption: (A) What a subject is aware of over an interval of time is determined by what the subject is aware of at each of the instants, or shorter intervals of time, from which that larger interval of time is composed. But then once we accept (A) it becomes unclear how a subject can ever be aware of motion or succession, given that motion and succession take time. At none of the instants during the larger interval of time is the subject aware of change, succession, or motion.<sup>20</sup>

Assumption (A) overlooks the fact that given that activities and accomplishments are not homogeneous down to instants, if we have a state whose obtaining requires the occurrence of an activity or accomplishment, we will have a state whose obtaining is not homogeneous down to instants. So if we have a state whose obtaining requires the occurrence of an activity or accomplishment then we should have something analogous to imperfective paradox. Statives do not take the progressive, so it is only an analogy, but the analogy is this: If the state is one whose obtaining requires the occurrence of an activity or accomplishment, then while it may be true that S  $\Phi$ s during the interval t1 to tn, it need not follow that at every instant during that interval it can be truly said that S  $\Phi$ -ed. Take, for example, the following case: 'S is aware of x  $\Phi$ -ing', where the object of the awareness (x  $\Phi$ -ing) is an activity or an accomplishment. This state won't be homogeneous down to instants. From the fact that from S was aware of x  $\Phi$ -ing during the interval t1 to tn, it does not follow that at t5 S had already been aware of x  $\Phi$ -ing.

The rejection of (A) depends upon making sense of the idea that there are states whose obtaining requires the occurrence of some activity or accomplishment. This in turn requires holding that, at least in the case of certain states, the fact that a state holds at a time is determined by the fact that there is an interval of time, which includes that instant, during which the state obtains. This then gets us the following result: The fact that a subject is in a certain state at a particular time, may be determined, in part, by what happens before and / or after that time. It may be that at t1 the accomplishment / activity is occurring but has not yet occurred. So although the state obtains from t1 to tn, at t1 it is not true that the state has already obtained.

If we accept that the fact that a subject is in a state at a time may be determined by the fact that there is an interval of time, which includes that instant, during which the subject is in that state, then we may also be led to accept the following: The answer we give to the question of what state a subject is in at a time is determined by the answer we give to the question of what state the subject is in during an interval of time that includes that instant, and the answer we give to the question of what state a subject is in during an interval of time that includes that instant is going to be contextually dependent on the interval of time we have in mind. (E.g. compare the following two claims: (i) From t1 to t10 S was aware of O moving, so at t5 S was aware of S moving. (ii) From t5 to t6, S was aware of O occupying location L1, so at t5 S was aware of O at L1.) I shall be returning to this point later, but for now the main claim I want to recommend is that there are certain states such that we know a priori that their obtaining requires the occurrence of some event(s), such states are not homogeneous down to instants, and this distinctive feature of such states can do some explanatory work.

In the case of the state of 'being aware of x  $\Phi$ -ing' (e.g. being aware of the ball moving), we know a priori that the obtaining of the state requires the occurrence of some event, but the occurrence of the event need not entail the obtaining of the state. Are there other cases in which we not only know a priori that the obtaining of the state requires the occurrence of some event, but we also know a priori that the occurrence of the event entails the obtaining of the state? Indeed, are there states of awareness that have this feature? Well arguably, this is just the case where a subject is aware of some bodily sensation, for example a stabbing pain in his knee. The state of awareness of the sensation requires the occurrence of the sensation, and the

occurrence of the sensation entails the obtaining of the state of awareness of it. This is what makes the object of awareness, the sensation, at least in part, mind-dependent.<sup>21</sup>

In such cases, when it comes to specifying the nature of the state that obtains we need to make reference to the kind of occurrence in virtue of which that state obtains – i.e. in this case the stabbing pain sensation in the knee. But equally, when it comes to specifying the nature of the occurrence we need to make reference to the kind of state that obtains in virtue of its occurrence. This is how we know a priori not only that the obtaining of the state requires the occurrence of the event, but also that the occurrence of the event entails the obtaining of the state. Now in the case of the sensation of pain, it seems that more than one kind of state obtains in virtue of its occurrence. When the sensation of pain occurs, the states that obtain in virtue of that occurrence include not only the subject's awareness of the sensation, but also some bodily state, and his being in pain (where we're to think of this as some kind of affective state).<sup>22</sup> The thought here, then, is that when it comes to specifying the nature of the occurrence (the bodily sensation of pain) we ought to make reference to each of these states: the subject's awareness of the sensation occurring at some bodily location, his bodily state at that location (e.g. the way in which his knee is thereby affected), and his being in pain. And equally, when it comes to specifying the nature of each of these states we ought to make reference to the kind of occurrence in virtue of which such states obtain. So just as the state of awareness of the sensation cannot be specified without making reference to the occurrent sensation, the kind of bodily state that obtains – the way in which the subject's knee is affected – cannot be specified without reference to the sensation, and the specific kind of state of pain the subject is in cannot be specified without making reference to the bodily sensation.

With this picture in mind, I now turn to the question of what bearing such considerations may have on contemporary debates concerning the relation between the content and phenomenal character of perceptual experience.

### **Content and Phenomenal Character**

One finds questions about the phenomenal character of an aspect of mind – the what-it-is-like features of that aspect of mind – posed in different ways. For example, compare: What is it like for a subject when *x* occurs, or for a subject to undergo *x*, where *x* picks out something event-like, for example a perceptual event?<sup>23</sup> And: What is it like for a subject to be in a given mental state, or to stand in a perceptual relation – e.g. what it is like for a subject to be in pain, or what it is like for the subject to see the colour red, or what is like for the subject when it visually seems to him that *p*?<sup>24</sup>

When asked a question about phenomenal character posed in the first kind of way, it is natural to interpret it as a question asking about the kind of mental state of the subject that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of *x*. That is, it looks as though one provides an answer to the question when one specifies some mental state of the subject that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of *x*. For example, one can answer the question by saying something of the form, ‘it seems to the subject that *p*’, or ‘the subject is aware of *o*’.

When one reflects upon one’s perceptual experience, considered as an event, or process, and one is asked what it is like for one to be undergoing such an experience, one ends up specifying, picking out, mental states or perceptual relations that obtain. So you are asked to attend to your perceptual experience, an event, and to say something about its features, but you end up saying something about yourself – something true of *S*, where *S* is not an event, but a subject. But this shouldn’t be so

puzzling, for the relevant features of the event you are asked to characterise, are features of the event that modify you in various ways. You are characterising what it is like for you when such an event occurs. So you are thereby specifying features of the event in a relational way – in terms of what is true of you when such an event occurs.<sup>25</sup> So the assumption behind the first kind of question seems to be that one can say something about the relevant features of the event by saying something about oneself. We make sense of this when we realise that these features are, of necessity, ones that we must specify in a relational way – e.g. in terms of some state of oneself that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of such an event.

But then once one has answered the question in this way, the second question presents itself: What is it like to be in such a state? The assumption in play here, then, seems to be the following. One describes what it is like for one when a perceptual event occurs by describing what state one is in, or what perceptual relation one stands in, but in doing so, one has left something out, for someone can then ask, what it is like for you to be in such a state, or to stand in such a relation – as if more needs to be said. So what lies behind this thought that more needs to be said?

Intuitively, we want to mark a distinction between the phenomenally conscious mental states and the mental states that are not phenomenally conscious. Perceptual states are among the phenomenally conscious ones. But what makes such states phenomenally conscious? One might think that the obvious, albeit trivial, answer is that the phenomenally conscious mental states have phenomenal properties, whereas the mental states that are not phenomenally conscious do not have such mental properties.<sup>26</sup> But then once one has conceded this much, one might ask about the nature of such properties. What are they? Assuming that your mental state has

phenomenal, what-it-is-like properties, tell us what they are, describe them. Hence the question, ‘what is it like for you to be in that mental state?’

This can then lead to a debate about the nature of the phenomenal properties of these mental states. Whether, for example, these phenomenal properties just are representational properties of the state<sup>27</sup>, whether they are non-representational properties, and whether there is some supervenience relation between them<sup>28</sup>. Some will argue that phenomenal properties cannot be representational properties on the grounds that a state could have the representational properties and yet not be a phenomenally conscious one.<sup>29</sup> So on the one hand, one’s intuition may be that one misses something out if one simply specifies the representational features of a phenomenally conscious mental state, and so one may feel that phenomenal properties are not to be identified with representational properties. However, on the other hand, one may feel that once one specifies the representational properties of the state, there is nothing left over for introspection to discover – there are no further properties, over and above the representational properties, that are salient, that one can attend to, and whose intrinsic nature one can specify – and, one might think, if any properties are discoverable through introspection, surely the phenomenal properties are.<sup>30</sup> So this way of regarding matters may result in conflicting intuitions.

I suggest that some of the considerations mentioned earlier regarding the relation between perceptual events and their properties and perceptual states and their properties can offer a diagnosis of what is going on in this debate. Suppose one thinks that phenomenally conscious perceptual states obtain in virtue of the occurrence of phenomenally conscious perceptual events or processes. Then one can, in principle, individuate these states at different levels of abstraction. At one level of abstraction one types the kind of state that obtains without making any reference to the kind of

mental event in virtue of whose occurrence it obtains. In typing such a state in this way, one allows that such a state could in principle obtain without the occurrence of a mental event of that kind. Now we imagine a creature whose mental life consists in the obtaining of such states – perceptual states that obtain without the occurrence of these perceptual events. There are no mental continuities that are processive in character and that are not reducible to a series of gradual and continual changes to mental states. So the mental life of such a creature does not include aspects of mind that fit the ontological profile of an element of the stream of phenomenal consciousness. The phenomenal stream of consciousness is simply absent.

Now suppose instead we do not individuate perceptual states at this level of abstraction, but rather, we individuate the kind of state that obtains in terms of the kind of mental event in virtue of whose occurrence that state obtains. Individuating perceptual states at this level of abstraction commits to the idea that such states are of the same kind only if they obtain in virtue of the occurrence of perceptual events of the same kind.<sup>31</sup> What are the features of such events that we appeal to in so individuating perceptual states? Let us assume they are the phenomenal properties of the events in question. But then what are these phenomenal properties? As we have already noted, they are, of necessity, features of the event we characterise in a relational way – i.e. in terms of the kind of state that obtains in virtue of their occurrence. So then there seems to be a form of circularity here – a form of explanatory circularity.

In individuating a phenomenally conscious mental state as such, we say that a mental state is of the kind F iff it obtains in virtue of the occurrence of a mental event of type G, but when it comes to individuating the kind of event in question we say that

a mental event is of kind G iff a mental state of kind F obtains in virtue of its occurrence.

This form of circularity can tempt one into making different kinds of mistake. One potential mistake is to think that the phenomenally conscious mental state can obtain without the occurrence of a phenomenally conscious mental event. One may be tempted to think that there is a way of individuating the state that obtains without making essential reference to the kind of mental event in virtue of whose occurrence that state obtains.<sup>32</sup> Another potential mistake is to think that the phenomenally conscious event can occur without the obtaining of the mental state. Making this latter mistake might lead one to think that a mental event can have phenomenal properties without it being true that the subject who is undergoing such an event is thereby in some intentional mental state.<sup>33</sup>

The account I recommend offers a form of diagnosis of what may be going on in the debate concerning the relation between the phenomenal properties of a mental state and the representational, or intentional, properties of that mental state. The phenomenal properties of a perceptual event are properties of the event in virtue of whose occurrence an intentional perceptual state obtains. Thus construed, the phenomenal properties of the perceptual event are not identical to representational properties of the perceptual state. The phenomenal properties are properties of the perceptual event in virtue of whose occurrence the representational perceptual state obtains. Although the phenomenal properties are not representational properties of the perceptual state, we specify them by appeal to the kind of perceptual state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of a perceptual event with those properties.<sup>34</sup> So we specify the phenomenal properties of the event in a relational way, and we can only specify them in this relational way. So although the phenomenal properties of the event are

not identical to representational properties of the state, there is a necessary connection between them, and this is because there is a necessary connection between the occurrence of an event with those phenomenal properties, and the obtaining of a state with those representational properties.

We can only specify the phenomenal properties of the event in a relational way – in terms of the kind of state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of an event with those properties. This is why when we specify the intentional properties of the state it seems that there are no properties left for introspection to discover. For we have already specified the phenomenal properties of the event – albeit in a relational way – the only way in which we can specify them. But then if we individuate the kind of state that obtains – the perceptual state – without reference to the kind of event in virtue of whose occurrence that perceptual state obtains – i.e. without reference to the features of the event in virtue of whose occurrence the state obtains – then we do not individuate a phenomenally conscious mental state as such. Hence the intuition that if we simply specify the representational properties of the phenomenally conscious state we have left something out – something crucial that makes the mental state a phenomenally conscious one. In order to individuate the phenomenally conscious state as such we have to appeal to the kind of event in virtue of whose occurrence that state obtains. The circularity arises because the phenomenal properties of the event can themselves only be specified in a relational way – in terms of the kind of state that obtains in virtue of such an occurrence.<sup>35</sup>

Earlier I considered an objection to the claim that what is distinctive of the phenomenally conscious aspects of mind is the fact that they have an ontological profile that makes them suited to feature in the stream of consciousness. The objection to this proposal was that this would seem to suggest that there are no phenomenally

conscious mental states. For according to O'Shaughnessy, mental states obtain for periods of time. They do not unfold over time, they are not processive in character, and so this means they do not have an ontological profile that makes them suited to feature in the stream of consciousness. If the phenomenally conscious aspects of mind are those that feature in the stream of consciousness, then this in turn suggests that there are no phenomenally conscious mental states. We are now in a position to respond to the objection. The phenomenally conscious mental states are those whose obtaining requires the occurrence of phenomenally conscious mental events, or processes. Phenomenally conscious mental states and phenomenally conscious mental events / processes are intimately related. The latter cannot occur without the obtaining of the former, and the former cannot obtain without the occurrence of the latter.<sup>36</sup>

In discussions of perceptual experience it is sometimes assumed that we can specify, or refer to, a subject's perceptual experience in such a way that we can then ask after the content of that experience. In particular, the assumption seems to be that if we specify the particular instant of time we have in mind, we can then ask after the content of the perceptual (e.g. visual) state of the subject that obtains at that time.<sup>37</sup> This assumption might lead one to wonder what it is that determines whether a subject has, at a given time, a perceptual experience that represents change, or rather a change of perceptual experience.

A consequence of the view being recommended here is that the assumption on which this question is based is a mistake. Phenomenally conscious perceptual states obtain in virtue of the occurrence phenomenal events and processes with duration. This might lead one to think that we should be able to identify a particular perceptual event that occurs at a time, and then ask after the content of that particular event. A question this might then give rise to, is what distinguishes one particular perceptual

event from its numerically distinct successor? Indeed, what distinguishes one particular numerically distinct particular event from another numerically distinct particular event that occurs at the same time? I have suggested that we can only specify a phenomenal event in a relational way – in terms of the kind of state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of an event with those properties. So we cannot first identify a particular perceptual event and then ask after the content of the state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of that event, for we specify the event or process in question in terms of the state that obtains in virtue of its occurrence.

Since phenomenally conscious perceptual states obtain in virtue of the occurrence phenomenal events and processes with duration, the answer we give to the question of what phenomenally conscious state a subject is in at a time is determined by the answer we give to the question of what phenomenally conscious state the subject is in during an interval of time that includes that instant. Furthermore, since we cannot first identify a particular perceptual event and then ask after the content of the state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of that event, the answer we give to the question of what phenomenally conscious state a subject is in at a time is going to be contextually dependent on which interval of time that includes that instant we have in mind. So, given that there are indefinitely many different periods of time that any instant will part of, it is a mistake to think that we can identify the perceptual state a subject is in by specifying the time at which it obtains and then ask after the content of that state.<sup>38</sup> For example, it may be true of S that he is in perceptual state P from t1 to t3, perceptual state Q from t2 to t5, and perceptual state R from t1 to t7, and so on. So we can no longer simply ask what perceptual state S was in at t2, and this is why it is a mistake to think that there should be some way of determining whether we have,

over a given period of time, a change in perceptual content or a perceptual content that represents change.<sup>39</sup>

I want to close by returning to the issue with which we began – Geach’s argument against the idea that there is a Jamesian stream of conscious thought. If Geach’s arguments are successful in showing that mental acts of judging and mental acts of thinking thoughts are not elements in the stream of consciousness, should we deny that such mental acts could be phenomenally conscious? In arguing that there is no Jamesian stream of thought, Geach compares and contrasts the mental acts of judging and thinking thoughts on the one hand, with sensory processes, on the other. Should we accept that there could be no stream of thought, only a stream of sensory processes or events?<sup>40</sup>

### **Thinking and Sensing**

In Res Cogitans, Vendler offers an account of thinking that involves an analysis of propositional verbs of the categories ‘mental act’ and ‘mental state’. He imagines an objector to his account arguing in the following way:

By focusing exclusively on the sense of the word thought, which denotes the content or product of the mental processes, I ignore these processes themselves, or worse... I create the impression that... I have exhausted the topic of thinking altogether.

The hypothetical objector continues,

Thinking is an activity, a process, something that goes on, which we can pursue, and of which we are aware throughout our conscious life. Thinking is the stream of consciousness, the buzzing, blooming confusion of images, sounds, feelings, and emotions; interspersed, it is true, by words or even sentences dimly ‘heard’, sub-vocally ‘pronounced’, or ‘glanced at’ with the mind’s eye... We ask in the progressive tense ‘what are you thinking about?’... Moreover the philosophically interesting sense of thinking is this process sense; the process of thinking constitutes our ‘inner life’. (p. 40)

In replying to this objection, Vendler writes,

In thinking about something one goes through a series of mental acts often involving some changes of mental states; one may guess, assume, realise, or conclude that something is the case; regard, consider or view a certain thing in many ways; contemplate, plan, and decide to do one thing or another; and wonder about consequences. The idea that one might be thinking about something without performing any of these or similar acts is as incomprehensible as the idea of talking about something without saying anything at all. (p. 41)

According to Vendler, these mental acts and states are individuated, in part, by their propositional contents, and they are not to be identified with “the flux of words and images we perceive with the imagination”. As mentioned earlier, Geach, in a similar vein, rejects the idea that “to think certain thoughts is to have certain mental images, feelings, unspoken words etc., passing through one’s mind” (1969, p. 34).<sup>41</sup>

Returning to our starting point, the message from both Geach and Vendler seems to be that the activity of thinking is distinguished from the kind of sensory activity that makes up the stream of one's conscious mental life. So should we accept the conclusion that there is no stream of conscious thought?

Recall the suggestion that we can pick out at different levels of abstraction a mental state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of a phenomenally conscious mental event or process. For example, we can pick out such a state at a level of abstraction that makes no reference to the kind of event in virtue of whose occurrence it obtains. In picking out a mental state at this level of abstraction we do not individuate it in terms of its phenomenal character. Picking out a mental state at this level of abstraction can be useful, for it allows us to pick out important commonalities between phenomenally conscious mental states and states that are not phenomenally conscious, and it also allows us to pick out important commonalities between mental states that obtain in virtue of phenomenally conscious mental events of different kinds.<sup>42</sup>

We can also make sense of the idea of picking out phenomenally conscious mental events at different levels of abstraction. We can pick out a phenomenally conscious mental event at a level of abstraction that does not make any reference to its phenomenal character. For example, if a phenomenally conscious mental event results in the acquisition of mental state that is not phenomenally conscious, then in describing the event as such (i.e. as an event that results in the acquisition of such a state), we need make no reference to the phenomenal features of the event. Picking out mental events at this level of abstraction may also allow us to pick out important commonalities between mental events of different phenomenally conscious kinds.

Mental events that we think of as cognitive, rather than sensory, are, I suggest, usually mental events that are individuated at this level of abstraction. The mental act of judging is just such an example. This then suggests the following possibility. A subject's mental act of judging that *p* may involve the occurrence of a phenomenally conscious mental act, for example the subject's saying something in inner speech, but when this mental event is picked out as one of judging, the phenomenal character of the mental event drops out of the picture, for we want to allow that a mental act of the same kind – 'judging that *p*' – could occur even if it did not have the same phenomenal character. What marks out a mental act as being one of judging, it might be argued, is the fact that the mental act results in the acquisition of a belief – a mental state of a kind that is not individuated in terms of its phenomenal character.<sup>43</sup> And as an event does not need to have any specific kind of phenomenal character in order to satisfy this requirement, when we pick out a mental act as being one of 'judging' we should make no reference to its phenomenal character.

The result is that when one picks out a phenomenally conscious mental act as one of judging, the kind of event one describes it as, makes no reference to its phenomenal character. So although the event has temporal duration, as it is a phenomenally conscious one, the kind of event one refers to it as, makes no reference to its being the kind of event that has temporal duration. So a mental event that is an element in the Jamesian stream of consciousness – a phenomenally conscious occurrence – is picked out as a mental event of a kind that makes no reference to the features of it that make it suited to be an element in the stream of consciousness.<sup>44</sup> This can then lead to the conclusion that there is no stream of thought. There can only be a stream of processes of a sensory nature. In the case of conscious mental acts of judging, any phenomenally conscious occurrence can at best be seen as a vehicle of

that act of judging; but whether such an act of judging requires the occurrence of a phenomenally conscious event to act as its vehicle, is a further matter.<sup>4546</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Dennett and Kinsbourne 1992, and Dennett 1991, Chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>2</sup> See Vendler 1957. (See also Kenny 1963, Ch. 8; Steward 1997, Ch. 3; Rothstein 2004; and Mourelatos 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Contrast here the act asserting that  $p$  which involves doing something  $X$  with the intention of communicating something to someone, and also trying to determine whether  $p$  which involves doing something in an attempt to find out whether  $p$ .

<sup>4</sup> It is often claimed that achievements are events that do not have an internal structure, because they are changes to states. So ‘how long did it take to  $\Phi$ ?’ is asking about the amount of time before the happening – before the event of  $\Phi$ -ing – rather than how long the actual  $\Phi$ -ing took.

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<sup>5</sup> Note also that ‘S imagines that p’ has a non-frequentive, non-habitual and hence stative reading, and where the obtaining of the state doesn’t seem to require the subject’s activity, but in this case the phrase denotes a belief / opinion.

<sup>6</sup> Walton (1990) claims that there are non-occurrent imaginings, but the important point is that the non-occurrent state of imagining that p obtains only if the subject is engaged in some activity.

<sup>7</sup> Compare here Peacock’s ‘S-imagining’ (Peacocke 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Compare Velleman (2000) on imagining that p as regarding p as true. On the notion of self-imposed constraints in acts of imagination see Elster 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Compare here Dummett on supposing: “I could have said, ‘Think of a number’, then ask ‘Have you done so yet?’, but it would be a joke if I asked that question having said ‘Suppose the witness is telling the truth’.” Dummett 1972, p. 312-3.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Mouton (1969) on ‘starting’: “It is a conceptual point that starting has no duration ... we do not consider any part of the motion or rest as being part of the starting. To move at all is to have started. There can by definition be no duration during which one is starting... Then the function of ‘start’ is not to describe a process, activity or state, but to suggest that a change has taken place”, (p. 69). See also Ryle 1949, p. 143 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Geach suggests that led by this line of reasoning it may then seem that we are forced to accept one of the following two options: (i) an act of thinking a thought, or making a judgement, is an instantaneous event, and these acts are separated by gaps of thoughtlessness; or (ii) in any finite stretch of time there will be an illimitable number of thoughts – i.e. acts of thinking. In fact Geach rejects both options. He claims that these options only seem forced upon us when we mistakenly assume a Newtonian or Kantian view of time – i.e. a view of time according to which time is taken as

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logically prior to events, and according to which events occupy divisible stretches of time or indivisible instants of time. Geach claims that if we reject this view and think in terms of time-relations, then we can say that thoughts don't have all of the time-relations that physical events and sensory processes have. So Geach concludes, "All that we can say is that the judgement is loosely bound up with physical time. If we try to assign it to a definite moment, or moments, or stretch of time, we find ourselves in a bog of nonsense." (1957, p. 106). Rather than discussing the merits, or otherwise, of Geach's positive account of the matter, I want to remain focused on the question of whether Geach has successfully shown that we should jettison the Jamesian notion of the 'stream of thought'. For further discussion of this aspect of Geach's argument, see Farrell 1972, Ginnane 1960, and Mouton 1969.

<sup>12</sup> Compare here Steward, who writes, "In merely giving the temporal dimensions of an existent thing – in specifying the beginning and end-points of its existence – one does not thereby determine its temporal character. For vastly more important than these temporal reference points, in determining the ontological category of any item, is the way in which that item fills the relevant period of time – whether it persists through the time, or occurs during the time, or obtains throughout the time, etc." (1997, p. 73)

<sup>13</sup> Compare Steward, who writes, "States, unlike events, do not unfold; they do not occur. I suggest, then, that states are like continuants in lacking temporal parts". (1997, p. 74)

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Harman 1990, Tye 1995 and 2003, Dretske 1995, Searle 1983, Peacocke 1992, Burge 1991.

<sup>15</sup> They seem to be atelic, and cumulative. (See Rothstein 2004 for a discussion of these notions). On the cummulativity of the term used to pick out the experience: If

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there is an event of its seeming to S that  $p$  from  $t_1$  to  $t_5$ , and there is a successive event of its seeming to S that  $p$  from  $t_5$  to  $t_{10}$ , then we can say that there was an event of its seeming to S that  $p$  from  $t_1$  to  $t_{10}$ .

<sup>16</sup> If stative verbs are coerced out of their natural stativity, they are coerced into an achievement reading. E.g. the modification in a time coerces a telic and so achievement reading: e.g. ‘he knew the answer in three hours’. This also appears to be the case with the perceptual seems (e.g. we might ask ‘how long did it take for it to seem to S that  $p$ ?’ where this is a question about the time taken before the state picked out by ‘it seemed to S that  $p$ ’ is acquired. This then provides further evidence that the verb phrase picks out a state.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the discussion of this example in Steward 1997, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> See Rothstein 2004, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> This goes back to Aristotle’s distinction between kinesis and energia. Compare also Kenny 1963, Ch. 8.

<sup>20</sup> See for example the discussions in James 2001, Husserl 1964, Broad 1923, Prichard 1925a and 1925b, Daniton 2000, and Kelly 2005.

<sup>21</sup> I say ‘at least in part mind-dependent’, for the subject of the sensation is aware of the occurrence of the sensation at a bodily location, and that bodily location is not, and does not appear to the subject to be, mind-dependent.

<sup>22</sup> The kind of affective state that obtains in virtue of the occurrence of the pain sensation is relevant to answering the question of what it is that the sensation of a paper cut and a migraine have in common that makes them both sensations of pain. The distinctions I draw between the occurrent sensation (the object of awareness) and the different kinds of state that obtain in virtue of its occurrence are also relevant to the issue of why it is that we seem to have various ways of talking about pain. We talk

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in terms of (a) pain as object of awareness (there is a burning sensation in my hand); (b) pain as awareness of sensation (I feel a burning sensation in my hand); (c) pain as a condition of some part of one's body (my hand hurts); and we often talk as though pain is a psychological state of the subject (I am in pain). I don't have the space to discuss these matters here, but ideally we should try to provide an account that can accommodate each of these different ways of talking about pain, rather than assuming that some of these ways of talking are just confused.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see Byrne 2001 and 2004.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Chalmers 2004 and Siewart 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Compare the discussion of committed and uncommitted allorepresentation in Travis 2004. We may say, for example, when asked to characterise the features of a perceptual event *x*: (i) in virtue of *x* it seems to me that *p*; or (ii) *x* is such that it seems to me that *p*; or (iii) *x* is such that it represents it to be the case that *p*. But in the latter case, we are implicitly saying one of the other two things: *x* is such that it represents it to be the case that *p*, because *x* is such that it seems to me that *p*, or in virtue of *x* it seems to me that *p*.

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Chalmers 2004.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Harman 1990, Tye 1995 and 2003, Carruthers 2000, Dretske 1995, Lycan 1996.

<sup>28</sup> See Horgan and Tienson 2002, McGinn 1988, Siewart 1998, Chalmers 2004. See also the discussion of this issue in Byrne 2001, and also Crane 2003.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Block 1978, 1990, 2003, Chalmers, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> See Tye 1995 and 2003, and Harman 1990. According to the Naïve Realist, the objects and features the subject is aware of in having the experience determine the

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phenomenal character of a subject's experience. This account offers a different diagnosis of the transparency claim. For an argument for the claim that this introspective data is accommodated by the idea that perceptual experiences have Naïve Realist phenomenal properties, see Martin 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Compare the earlier claim about the individuation of states of being in pain in the case of feeling a paper cut and having a migraine. At the most specific level of abstraction we can regard these states of pain as being of phenomenally different kinds in virtue of the fact that they obtain in virtue of the occurrence of phenomenal events of differing kinds. At a more general level of abstraction we can regard both states of pain as being of the same kind by noting that a similar kind of affective state obtains in virtue of the occurrence of each sensation. There are of course important differences between the bodily sensation of pain and the kind of perceptual experience we have in the visual case. In the former case the phenomenal occurrence in virtue of which the experience obtains is itself an object of awareness, whereas in the visual case the state of awareness, or apparent awareness, that obtains in virtue of some phenomenal occurrence is not an awareness of the phenomenal occurrence itself, but rather objects, events and features in the world. In the case of bodily sensation, the object of awareness seems to be one whose occurrence entails the obtaining of the state of awareness of it, whereas in the case of vision this isn't the case, hence the apparent mind-dependence of the object of awareness in the case of bodily sensation, but not in the case of vision.

<sup>32</sup> The claim is, I suggest, implicit in the accounts of various representationalists.

<sup>33</sup> Compare, for example, Siewert's (2002) discussion of Sellars 1963.

<sup>34</sup> For the purposes of this paper I have been assuming that the phenomenal character of the perceptual occurrence can be adequately characterised in terms of some

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representational perceptual state. If the naïve realist is right, then it may turn out that the state in terms of which we need to characterise the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience is, rather, the subject's awareness of various objects, events and features in the world.

<sup>35</sup> Compare the discussion of the views of James and Whitehead in Pred 2005: "The idea is to be alive to what is filtered out by various methods of analysis that rely on withdrawal from the stream, to be alive to the distortions such filtering introduces, to honour the felt continuities in the stream, and to be loose and gently attentive enough within the concrete to be able to freshly remember experiences as from within the stream, rather than attempting to make contact with them by thinking about mental states, frozen substantive parts, or some language-mediated version of them" (p. 13).

<sup>36</sup> Among the phenomenally conscious mental states whose obtaining requires the occurrence of phenomenally conscious mental events / processes we might include cognitive phenomenal states, such one's knowledge of what it is like to have a perceptual experience. For a development of this idea see my 'The Epistemological Role of Episodic Recollection'.

<sup>37</sup> We can contrast this with our assumptions about belief. In general we don't think it makes sense to ask after the content of the belief you have now. We can of course ask whether you now believe that p, and we can also ask for your opinion about x, but the point is that we would not then be characterising the content of a mental state that we had picked out and identified prior to some specification of its content, for which we could then ask, 'is that really the content of that belief?'

<sup>38</sup> Compare Travis 2004: "I am going to suppose, for working purposes, that what would make the representational content recognizable to the perceiver – if experience represented anything as so – would be, in some sense or other, the way things then

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look, or appear, or, again, their looking, or appearing, as they do. So in some sense of ‘looks’ or ‘appears’, if things look or appear as they do on a given occasion, that should leave exactly one representational content for that particular experience to have. On that occasion, at least, a different content would have required things to look, or appear, different”. (p. 63)

<sup>39</sup> A connected point, which I don’t have the space to argue for here, is that I also think it is a mistake to think of a subject’s perceptual experience of the world as necessarily involving the occurrence of particular, numerically distinct, individual events. The assumption overlooks the possibility that there are certain terms that pick out occurrences that behave more like mass nouns than count nouns, and so this kind of ‘how many’ question may be inappropriate. (For discussion of this idea, see Mourrelatos 1978 on the distinction between event and process). Of course we may still ask how many kinds of experience a subject undergoes at a time or over a given interval of time, but that is another matter. I believe these distinctions may be relevant to debates about the synchronic and diachronic unity of consciousness. Briefly, as these debates are often set up, the problem of synchronic unity is that of accounting for ‘co-consciousness’, where ‘co-consciousness’ refers to the relation that experiences bear to one another when they are experienced together. The question is, what binds these various experiences together at a time? Turning to the problem of diachronic unity, the question we are asked is, when perceptual experiences succeed one another, what unifies these experiences as they unfold over time? So one issue to explore is how the way in which these debates are framed is affected once we mark the distinction between event and process, and regard perceptual experience as process, rather than event. For discussions of the unity of consciousness, see, for

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example, Dainton 2000, Tye 2003, Bayne 2001, Bayne and Chalmers 2003, and Gallagher 2003.

<sup>40</sup> See Geach's discussion of Aquinas on sensation vs. thought, in Anscombe and Geach 1961, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> For an argument against the claim that we engage in purely propositional thinking, see Carruthers 1998: "I propose... that what we often describe as purely propositional (non-verbal) thoughts, available to introspection (and hence conscious), are really the results of active self-interpretation. So even when the interpretation in question happens to be correct, and the thoughts are self-ascribed veridically, these thoughts are not conscious ones", (p. 118). Compare also Burge, who writes, "A being that lacks phenomenal consciousness could not be conscious in any way. It would not, for example, have imageless conscious thought" (1997, p. 429). (See also O'Shaughnessy 2003, p. 355, and Heil 2004, p. 232-3).

<sup>42</sup> Compare the distinction drawn by Bayne and Chalmers (2003) between phenomenal states and phenomenally conscious states.

<sup>43</sup> Here I overlook the complication that one can consciously judge something one already believes to be true. For more on this point see my 'Mental Action and the Epistemology of Mind'.

<sup>44</sup> Compare here a case in which we pick out an act of a subject's judging that *p* when he is thinking out loud.

<sup>45</sup> For a development of this line of thought see my 'Mental Agency, Conscious Thinking and Phenomenal Character'.

<sup>46</sup> For helpful discussion and I am very grateful to audiences at the University of Stirling, the University of Edinburgh, the Massachusetts Bay Philosophy Alliance, the

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