University of Alberta

Accounting for Pure Consciousness

An Examination of the Ability of the Representationalist Approach to Phenomenal Consciousness to Account for Pure Consciousness Experiences

by

James K. Bachmann

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Philosophy

Spring 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Abstract

Any successful theory of phenomenal consciousness must be able to account for all types of phenomenally conscious experience. Representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness take phenomenally conscious experience to be intentional and explain phenomenally conscious experience in terms of the represented properties of the object(s) of experience. Pure consciousness experiences are a type of phenomenally conscious experience that can occur as the result of meditation or psychedelic drug use, and descriptions of pure consciousness experiences can be found in resources that range from ancient texts to contemporary scientific studies. Pure consciousness experiences completely lack any sort of content and because of this lack of content pure consciousness experiences pose a prima facie problem for representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness. After explaining pure consciousness experiences and providing evidence of their occurrence, I consider whether representationalist theories can overcome this prima facie problem and successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. I consider various ways representationalist theories might do this before arguing that representationalist theories are inadequate and ultimately rejecting a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences. Given that representationalism can not successfully account for pure consciousness experiences, representationalism is not a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

Acknowledgements

I was fortunate to have a very supportive and wonderfully complementary supervisory committee. First and foremost I would like to thank Dr. Robert A. Wilson for being an excellent supervisor whose guidance, knowledge, and much-appreciated flexibility were rivalled only by his ability to read drafts and respond to email at unbelievable speeds. I would also very much like to thank Dr. Neil Dalal and Dr. Michael R. W. Dawson, the other members of my supervisory committee, whose expertise has been invaluable. I am grateful for all of their help and feedback, as well as that from numerous other people throughout this process.

Thanks very much also to my friends and family for their care and support over the years. Thanks in particular to my father for encouraging me to hurry up and finish and, especially, to my mother, without whom this would not have been possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction

"Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call ... reference to a content, direction toward an object ... , or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on."

- Franz Brentano[1]

"[W]e will reach a state of consciousness ... without an object of experience ... beyond all seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting - beyond all thinking and beyond all feeling."

- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi[2]

"No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these ... forms of consciousness quite disregarded."

- William James[3]

Many continue to follow Franz Brentano's path, even if not precisely his footsteps, believing that intentionality is the mark of the mental. Whether the mental is merely inseparable from intentionality or whether the mental is derived from intentionality, or vice versa, is another question. Regardless, however, many hold that the mental, including all phenomenally conscious experience, is always, at least partly if not completely, intentional. This means that there can never be phenomenally conscious experience that is completely void of any intentionality.

1 Brentano, Franz (2009/1874) *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Antos C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell, and Linda L. McAlister, trans. Routledge at 68.

2 Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi (1966) *The Science of Being and Art of Living*. International SRM Publications at 51-52.

3 James, William (2002-2013/1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Electronic Classics Series at 374.

How can such a claim be reconciled with reports from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and numerous others of phenomenally conscious experience that has no content and that is not *of* or *about* anything? As William James suggests, any sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness must be able to account for all phenomenally conscious experience. Can these reports of contentless "pure consciousness" experiences be reconciled with the claim that all phenomenally conscious experience is intentional? Or are there phenomenally conscious experiences that do not have any intentionality at all and thus phenomenal consciousness can, and at least sometimes does, exist independently of intentionality?

I shall begin by explaining what is meant by "intentionality." I will then explain what phenomenal consciousness is, followed by an explanation of pure consciousness experiences. After this I consider various types of theories of phenomenal consciousness and whether accounting for pure consciousness experiences poses a special problem for the type of theory in question. As will be discussed, unlike other types of theories of phenomenal consciousness, pure consciousness experiences pose a special problem for representationalist theories. I conclude the introduction by providing an overview of the rest of this work, which addresses the issue of whether representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness can accommodate pure consciousness experiences and, if so, how they might do so. Representationalist theories are more accommodating than they may appear to be at first glance, but this accommodation, as we will see, comes at a price. I conclude by weighing in on the question of whether this price is too

much to accept, ultimately rejecting representationalism as a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

0.1 Intentionality

Basically, intentionality is the idea of being of or about something. Human mental states are often taken to be intentional, although some human mental states are more apparently intentional than others. Beliefs often serve as a prime example of an intentional mental state. Beliefs, regardless of whether one thinks beliefs themselves are phenomenally conscious, are of or about things. One's belief that the moon is smaller than the earth is about the moon, the earth, and relative size. Desires provide another such example. If one desires to eat a piece of cake, that desire is about cake and about what one wants to do with the cake. Knowledge is another example. If one knows that Nigeria is in Africa, this state of knowledge is about Nigeria, Africa, and the type of relationship that exists between them.

Whether nonhuman beings can have intentional mental states and/or whether things without mental states can still have intentional states are much more controversial issues, but arguments can be made that intentionality is not restricted to human mental states. Of those that accept that intentionality is not restricted to human mental states, some argue that these other types of intentionality are "derived," ultimately getting their intentionality from human interpretation. On such a view, human mental states are the only things that have

"original" intentionality.[4] Regardless of whether only human mental states have original intentionality, there is reason to think that intentionality is not limited to humans. For example, a dog can also desire to eat a piece of cake.

Further, mental states are arguably not always required for intentionality. For example, the position of a tuner on a radio indicates, or is about, the frequency of radio waves being picked up by the radio's antenna. As another example, the mercury level in a thermometer is about the air around it. The result displayed on a calculator, as another example, is about the numbers entered into it and the rules of math with which it has been programmed.

So far, the examples involving mental states (e.g., belief) have involved mental states that may or may not be phenomenally conscious, depending on the particular instance of them and/or one's general view on the issue. However, mental states that are clearly phenomenally conscious can be intentional as well. For example, if one looks out from a scenic viewpoint, one's visual experience is of the landscape and, more specifically, of trees and of mountains (or whatever is present in the landscape).

Some types of phenomenally conscious mental states are more controversial, but tenacious arguments have been made that they are also intentional. For example, an experience of pain is about damage to a body part. A feeling of fatigue, as another example, is about one's body and/or mind being in a certain type of non-ideal condition. Even experiences of color, for example, are

4 For more on original vs. derived intentionality see, e.g., Haugeland, John (1997) "What Is Mind Design?" in *Mind Design II: Philosophy, Psychology, Artificial Intelligence*, John Haugeland, ed. MIT Press, 1-28 at 7-8.

arguably intentional because they are about the light reflectance properties of the observed object.

As will also be discussed in Chapter 3, the notion of intentionality can be used to remove the mystery of phenomenal consciousness. What phenomenal consciousness actually is is often considered far from clear, but if phenomenal consciousness can be explained in intentional terms, then its mystery can (arguably, at least) be removed. If things and/or mental states that are not phenomenally conscious have intentionality, then intentionality can be explained in purely physical terms.[5] After all, for example, if a thermometer can have intentional states and a thermometer's states are entirely physical, then its intentional states are entirely physical. If phenomenally conscious mental states are intentional and intentionality can be explained in entirely physical terms, then phenomenal consciousness can be explained in entirely physical terms, thus removing its mystery (or at least making it no more mysterious in general than anything else that is part of the physical world). Thus there is significant incentive to view all phenomenally conscious mental states as intentional. The question at hand, then, is whether pure consciousness experiences can also be shown to be intentional or whether this view must be given up.

0.2 Phenomenal consciousness

There are different ways that one might talk about consciousness. One

5 Unless, of course, one thinks that the intentionality of anything (be it a mental state or something else) that is not phenomenally conscious is always derived and that only phenomenally conscious mental states have original intentionality.

might talk about a creature, such as a human, dog, or even caterpillar, being conscious if it is awake and responsive to environmental stimuli. However, what exactly counts as awake and responsive to environmental stimuli is not entirely clear. (For example, is a venus flytrap awake and responsive to environmental stimuli? How about a computer?) Further, it seems that we would want to count a creature as conscious, at least in some sense, when it is asleep and dreaming and thus not currently awake and (at least not always) responsive to environmental stimuli. It also seems that we would want to count a (even if only hypothetical) creature that dreams but is never awake and responsive to environmental stimuli as conscious in some sense as well. We would want to count these dreaming creatures as conscious in some sense because even though they are not awake and responsive to environmental stimuli, they have active mental lives that include such things as images, sounds, and/or emotions. Thus we need to distinguish between consciousness in the sense of being awake and responsive to environmental stimuli and consciousness in the sense of having a mental life that includes things such as images, sounds, and/or emotions. As already pointed out, these two types of consciousness are not always coextensive. A creature could be awake (at least in some sense) and responsive to environmental stimuli without ever having such a mental life and a creature could never be awake and responsive to environmental stimuli yet still dream and have such a mental life. The type of consciousness that involves being awake and responsive to environmental stimuli might be termed "creature consciousness."[6] The term "phenomenal

6 Not everyone uses the term "creature consciousness" the way I use it here. For example, Tim

consciousness" refers to such a mental life, regardless of whether the creature is awake and responsive to environmental stimuli. If a mental state consists of things such as sensations of colors or odors, feelings of pain or hunger or fatigue, emotions such as elation or worry, etc., etc., then that mental state is phenomenally conscious.

Creature consciousness and phenomenal consciousness are not the only distinctions made under the general heading of consciousness. For example, one might say that a creature is self-conscious if it is reflexively or introspectively aware of its own mental states. As another example, one might say that a mental state is access conscious if it is available to things such as verbal reports of one's own mental states or for use in guiding behavior. Although these two types of consciousness might best be considered subsets of phenomenal consciousness, they do not necessarily require phenomenal consciousness and one might consider a conscious creature (conscious in the sense of being awake and responsive to environmental stimuli) that lacks phenomenal consciousness to still be self-conscious and/or have mental states that are access conscious. The type of consciousness I am concerned with here is phenomenal consciousness and thus I will not further address these other types of consciousness.

Returning to phenomenal consciousness, another way to describe phenomenal consciousness is to say that a creature has phenomenally conscious mental states if there is something it is like to be that creature.[7] If there is

Bayne uses "creature consciousness" to refer to creatures that are phenomenally conscious. See Bayne, Tim (2007) "Conscious States and Conscious Creatures: Explanation in the Scientific Study of Consciousness." *Philosophical Perspectives* 21(1):1-22.

7 See Nagel, Thomas (1974) "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83:435-456.

something it is like to be that creature, then that creature has mental states that are phenomenally conscious. This definition of phenomenal consciousness may demand too much though if one takes the idea of there being something it is like to be that creature as entailing that there is something it is like *for* that creature. In other words, this definition entails too much to the extent that it requires a subject of experience and thus suggests that there is something it is like for some subject to be in a given mental state. A less committal way of defining phenomenally conscious mental states is to avoid the idea of a subject and say that phenomenally conscious mental states have qualitative properties or qualia. Qualia are the components of the sort of mental life described above and come in a wide variety, from the orangeness of a visual experience of orange to the high pitched squeak of a chirping bird to the sluggish feel of grogginess. Sensations of colors, sounds, smells, pains, and feelings, such as elation or grumpiness, are all examples of qualia.

Even defining phenomenal consciousness in terms of qualia leaves some room for debate and disagreement. For example, one might take the position that things such as thoughts and beliefs are completely lacking in qualia, but are still phenomenally conscious. One might also question precisely what the properties of qualia are.[8] We do not need to get into such issues for present purposes with one exception: Qualia must not be taken to be necessarily available to introspection. If pure consciousness experiences are taken to consist of a quale,

8 One of the more well-known articles addressing this issue is Dennett, Daniel C. (1990) "Quining Qualia" in *Mind and Cognition*, William G. Lycan, ed. Blackwell Publishing, 519-548.

then, given that pure consciousness experiences are not available to introspection (the reason why will become clear later), I reject any definition of qualia that requires that qualia are necessarily available to introspection. As for phenomenal consciousness, for present purposes it should suffice to say that a mental state is phenomenally conscious if it has qualia (or at least a quale) or, alternatively, if there is something it is like to be in that state even if there is arguably no subject for which there is something the state is like.

0.3 Pure consciousness experiences

Pure consciousness experiences are described as occurring when, one, one has a phenomenally conscious mental state that completely lacks any sort of content yet is still phenomenally conscious and, two, this is the only type of phenomenally conscious mental state that one is currently undergoing. Trying to explain what pure consciousness experiences are like to someone who has never undergone such an experience is rather like trying to explain what the phenomenal experience of color is like to Mary the brilliant scientist.[9] One must keep in mind that the difficulty one who has never had a pure consciousness experience might have in understanding what such an experience is like does not mean that such experiences are impossible or that others have not undergone such an experience. As W. T. Stace rather bluntly points out:

> If anyone thinks that a kind of consciousness without either

9 Mary is a hypothetical scientist that "specialises in the neurophysiology of vision" and (allegedly, at least) knows all physical information about vision and visual experience despite never having had a non-black and white visual color experience herself. See Jackson, Frank (1982) "Epiphenomenal Qualia" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32(127):127-136 at 130.

> sensations, images, or thoughts, because it is totally unimaginable and inconceivable to most of us, cannot exist, he is surely being very stupid. He supposes that the possibilities of this vast universe are confined to what can be imagined and understood by the brains of average human insects who crawl on a minute speck of dust floating in illimitable space.[10]

When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, one does not even have to be open to all of "the possibilities of this vast universe," but rather only to the possibility that others have had experiences that they have not.

A quote from William James should also help to make the inexperienced more receptive to the idea of pure consciousness experiences. There are two important things to note in this quote. One is that the sorts of experiences one tends to have in ordinary, day to day phenomenally conscious experience are not the only sorts of experiences that are possible. Consuming various drugs or alcohol or even spinning in circles until one is quite dizzy can easily demonstrate this fact. The other is the idea of unity and that objects of experience can be and sometimes are experienced as much more unified and indistinguishable than they often are in ordinary, day to day phenomenally conscious experience. The quote, which includes James's rather famous notion of "one great blooming, buzzing confusion," is as follows:

> The noticing of any *part* whatever of our object [of experience] is an act of discrimination. ... [W]e often spontaneously lapse

10 Stace, W. T. (1960) *The Teachings of the Mystics*. The New American Library at 14.

into the undiscriminating state, even with regard to objects which we have already learned to distinguish.[11] Such anaesthetics as chloroform, nitrous oxide, etc., sometimes bring about transient lapses even more total, in which numerical discrimination especially seems gone; for one sees light and hears sound, but whether one or many lights and sounds is quite impossible to tell. Where the parts of an object have already been discerned, and each made the object of a special discriminative act, we can with difficulty feel the object again in its pristine unity; and so prominent may our consciousness of its composition be, that we may hardly believe that it ever could have appeared undivided. But this is an erroneous view, the undeniable fact being that *any number of impressions, from any number of sensory sources, falling simultaneously on a mind* WHICH HAS NOT YET EXPERIENCED THEM SEPARATELY*, will fuse into a single undivided object for that mind.* The law is that all things fuse that *can* fuse, and nothing separates except what must. ... Although [impressions] separate easier if they come in through distinct nerves, yet distinct nerves are not an unconditional ground of their discrimination, as we

11 James provides an example of this: "Most people probably fall several times a day into a fit of something like this: The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world melt 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." James, William (1890) *The Principles of Psychology*. Classics in the History of Psychology. <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/James/Principles> at 404.

> shall presently see. The baby, assailed by eyes, ears, nose, skin, and entrails at once, feels it all as one great blooming, buzzing confusion; and to the very end of life, our location of all things in one space is due to the fact that the original extents or bignesses of all the sensations which came to our notice at once, coalesced together into one and the same space. There is no other reason than this why 'the hand I touch and see coincides spatially with the hand I immediately feel.'[12] (emphases and capitalization supplied)

Keeping in mind that ordinary phenomenally conscious experiences are not the only kinds possible and that experiences can be much more unified and indistinguishable than they often are should help to make the inexperienced more receptive to the idea of pure consciousness experiences than they might otherwise be. I shall now attempt to explain pure consciousness experiences to those that have never undergone such an experience.

As the quotes from Stace and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi have already indicated, pure consciousness experiences do not involve any sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensation, or proprioception. Pure consciousness experiences do not involve any thoughts, images, feelings, emotions, mood, desires, beliefs, or judgments. There is no awareness of any object of experience, nor is there any awareness of any subject of experience. There is no awareness of space, distance, direction, or location. There is no awareness of time. Nor is there

12 James, *The Principles of Psychology* at 487-488.

awareness of the lack of any of these things. Nor is there awareness of any other sort of content of experience one might be thinking of that I have not already mentioned. Despite all of this, the person undergoing such an experience remains awake and phenomenally conscious.

Perhaps the best way to describe the experience in more positive terms is to say that it consists of a "buzz" of phenomenal consciousness and nothing else. One should not take this term "buzz" literally, however; nor should one associate it too closely with James's use of the term in his phrase "blooming, buzzing confusion." I use the term "buzz" because I can think of no better term.[13] If one has a bird's eye view of a busy marketplace, with thousands of people moving in all sorts of directions, numerous vendors selling all sorts of colorful merchandise of all sorts of shapes and sizes, the sounds of haggling, and laughter, and casual conversation, and a vast array of aromas from a wide assortment of raw and prepared foods, one might say that there is a "buzz" to the marketplace. One might say this because it is the best way to describe the overall sensation of the experience even though there is nothing in the experience that is literally buzzing (assuming there are no bees or a chainsaw or anything else that one might take to literally buzz).

Of course, the experience of such a busy marketplace is quite the opposite of a pure consciousness experience: the experience of the marketplace is filled with sights, sounds, etc., and perhaps one's thoughts or feelings about the

13 As will be discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3, I also use the term "buzz" in an effort to describe and understand pure consciousness experiences in a way that aids representationalism. As we shall see, even with such aid representationalism seems unable to successfully account for pure consciousness experiences.

marketplace as well, whereas pure consciousness experiences are completely void of any such content. However, go back to the idea of the "buzz" of the busy marketplace. Now imagine taking away all of the shoppers and vendors, all of the merchandise and all of the other sights, sounds, smells, etc. (as well as any thoughts, feelings, etc. one might be having about the marketplace) while somehow leaving that "buzz." This is, I am sure, quite difficult to do and I am certainly not suggesting that the buzz one is left with is the same as the buzz of pure consciousness experiences, but the idea is that everything can be stripped away yet we are not left with absolutely nothing. In the case of pure consciousness experiences, all of the contents of experience are removed yet phenomenal consciousness remains.

One might now object that despite my attempt to explain pure consciousness experiences, such experiences are still completely unimaginable. As Stace has pointed out, though, just because one can not imagine such an experience does not mean that no one has ever had such an experience. Humans may be quite unable to imagine, for example, what it is like to be a bat, but this does not mean that there is not anything it is like to be a bat or that bats are not phenomenally conscious, including phenomenally conscious of echolocation-based experience.[14] Further, no one (at least to my knowledge) has ever claimed that pure consciousness experiences are imaginable to one who has never undergone one or that one can have such an experience at will. Quite the contrary,

14 I am not here claiming that bats are necessarily phenomenally conscious (although I think that they most likely are). Rather the point is that whether bats are or are not phenomenally conscious does not turn on whether or not humans can imagine what it is like to be a bat.

in fact: All reports of pure consciousness experiences (again, at least to my knowledge) come from people who practice meditation, and usually only advanced practitioners, or from people who have used certain psychedelic drugs, and even with such drug use pure consciousness experiences seem to be quite rare.

To anyone who claims that if we strip away all the contents of experience - all sights, sounds, thoughts, emotions, etc., etc. - we have nothing left, not even phenomenal consciousness itself or some sort of "buzz," my response is simply that, in fact, this is not true. Although different meditative traditions take somewhat different approaches, the idea, generally speaking, is to empty the mind of all thoughts, all emotions, all perceptual input, all images, etc. If one does this successfully, one will not blackout, but rather will have a pure consciousness experience. The claim that removing all such things from experience will result in no experience at all is false. One may have difficulty imagining that the result of such removal is a pure consciousness experience, but, again, what one can or can not imagine does not determine what is (unless, of course, what one is trying to determine is what one can and can not imagine).

In an effort to better understand what pure consciousness experiences are like, one who has never undergone such an experience might be wondering which experiences they have undergone are at least somewhat similar to pure consciousness experiences. However, no other experiences are similar in a crucial way because all other experiences involve some content. If they did not involve

at least some content, they would be pure consciousness experiences. Despite this defining difference between pure consciousness experiences and all other kinds of phenomenally conscious experiences, some experiences are still more similar to pure consciousness experiences than others. Having no content, there is no differentiation in pure consciousness experiences. There are no parts to or distinctions within the experience. As James points out, some drugs (both ones James mentions and others) can result in an inability to distinguish what would ordinarily be distinct sensory inputs or even inputs via distinct modalities. This reduced differentiation within the experience makes such experiences more like pure consciousness experiences than are most other experiences. Various mystical experiences, whether achieved through meditation, occurring spontaneously, or otherwise, also share certain similarities with pure consciousness experiences.[15] However, for anyone who has never undergone a mystical experience or been under the influence of (sufficient quantities of) relevant drugs (or at least can not recall such experiences if they have undergone them), these examples are of little help.

What more commonly occurring experiences are at least somewhat similar to pure consciousness experiences? James notes that "we often spontaneously lapse into the undiscriminating state, even with regard to objects which we have already learned to distinguish"[16] and gives as an example the "fit"[17] that "[m]ost people probably fall several times a day into ... : The eyes are fixed on vacancy,

15 See, e.g., James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* at Lectures XVI and XVII for numerous detailed descriptions of a significant variety of mystical experiences.
16 James, *The Principles of Psychology* at 487.
17 James, *The Principles of Psychology* at 404.

the sounds of the world melt into confused unity, the attention is dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were, at once ... ."[18] Many might call this state "spacing out" and many of us do it rather frequently. When spacing out everything sort of hazes over and we are not thinking of nor aware of anything in particular. While phenomenal consciousness is not empty as it is during pure consciousness experiences, this reduced differentiation and lack of awareness of anything in particular make such experiences more like pure consciousness experiences than are many other phenomenally conscious experiences.

Another example that may be familiar to many occurs when one starts to drift off to sleep (but, it seems, has not quite fully gone to sleep yet) and then suddenly wakes up again. I must admit that my own recollection of what this state of drifting off to sleep (prior to waking up again) is like is somewhat minimal and someone with a better recollection of this state might use it to corroborate or refute this example, but it seems that during this period of drifting off to sleep one is still phenomenally conscious, yet one's awareness of anything in particular, except perhaps things such as the pressure of the mattress beneath them, is extraordinarily minimal.[19]

A final example is a bit more humorous perhaps, but relevant nonetheless. In the movie *I Heart Huckabees*, two of the characters take turns hitting each other in the face with a red rubber ball so that they "stop thinking"[20] and

18 James, *The Principles of Psychology* at 404.

19 The relation of pure consciousness to deep sleep is a subject of ongoing debate. While I shall not enter that debate here, if one does actually experience pure consciousness during deep sleep, this supports the idea that the type of experience used in this example is similar to, or perhaps even is, pure consciousness.

20 *I Heart Huckabees* (2004) David O. Russell, dir. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

experience "pure being."[21] One character further says of the experience, "It's like I'm here, but I'm not...so I'm not here."[22] Whether this actually works to the extent claimed in the movie or not, as anyone who has ever been hit hard enough (but not too hard) in the face with a large blunt object is likely already aware, immediately afterward one experiences a brief period in which they are not particularly aware of anything, other than perhaps a stinging sensation across their face. In these examples, even though phenomenal consciousness may not be completely empty as it is during pure consciousness experiences, this minimal awareness of anything in particular makes the experiences significantly more like pure consciousness experiences than are most other sorts of phenomenally conscious experiences.

Some may suggest[23] that pure consciousness experiences' lack of differentiation means that while the person undergoing the experience may not be aware of any particular objects of experience they are still aware of, at least in some sense, some sort of concept, such as, for example, "unity" or "nothingness" or "now." While such words may be used in attempts to describe the experience, one must not take such descriptions so literally. As anyone who has undergone a genuine pure consciousness experience will attest to, such concepts are only used to try to explain the experience and describe what it is like; such concepts are not,

21 *I Heart Huckabees.*
22 *I Heart Huckabees.*
23 As has, for example, Rocco Gennaro in Gennaro, Rocco J. (2008) "Are There Pure Consciousness Events?" in *Revisiting Mysticism*, Chandana Chakrabarti and Gordon Haist, eds. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 100-120 and David Bourget in his comment on my (2013) "Pure Consciousness: A Problem for Representationalism?" Presented at The Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress 2013, June 2-5, in Victoria, Canada.

however, part of the experience itself. Like all first-person experiences, there is, unfortunately, no way that I can prove this to anyone who has never undergone the experience and wishes to deny first-person reports of the experience or insists on taking the descriptions literally. All I can say is that this is just not what the experience is like. Pure consciousness experiences are empty of even these sorts of abstract concepts.[24],[25]

To quote Stace again:

> To deny or doubt that it [i.e., the mystical consciousness, including pure consciousness experiences] exists as a psychological fact is not a reputable opinion. It is ignorance. Whether it has any value or significance beyond itself, and if so what - these, of course, are matters regarding which there can be legitimate differences of opinion.[26]

I now turn to the question of what significance pure consciousness experiences have for contemporary analytic theories of phenomenal consciousness.

0.4 Theories of phenomenal consciousness

While the focus here is on contemporary analytic theories of phenomenal consciousness, I include a few theories that many may not consider "contemporary" due to their current lack of popularity, but which should be

24 Support for this position can be found in various texts. For example, the Ariyapariyesana Sutta explains that "the dimension of nothingness" is only a step along the way to the ultimate goal. See Bhikkhu, Thanissaro (2004-2013) *Ariyapariyesana Sutta: The Noble Search*. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html>.

25 For a more thorough discussion of this issue see Chapter 1.

26 Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 14.

considered nonetheless so as to provide a more well-rounded view of analytic theories of phenomenal consciousness. I begin with one such theory: substance dualism.

Substance dualism, perhaps the most well-known proponent of which was René Descartes, posits that the physical and the mental[27] are different substances. The physical, generally speaking at least, consists of things that exist in time and space - things like atoms and subatomic particles and the things composed of them. The mental is a different kind of substance and is not part of the physical world, although what exactly this different substance is is not entirely clear. Nonetheless, any phenomenally conscious mental state is part of the mental, and not the physical, realm. Thus, if, for example, I have a visual experience of a rock cliff, the rock cliff is part of the physical realm, but my experience of the rock cliff is part of the mental realm. How something in the physical realm can result in an experience of that thing in the mental realm is often seen as a problem and proposed solutions are generally found to be unsatisfactory. If one believes in the causal closure of the physical, then how something in the physical realm can cause something in the mental realm or how something in the mental realm (for example, a desire to go to sleep) can cause something in the physical realm (like my going into the bedroom and lying down on my bed) is a fatal flaw for substance dualist theories.

Let us ignore this arguably fatal flaw for a moment though and consider

27 Throughout this section I use the term "mental" to refer to phenomenal consciousness and not nonconscious processes or occurrences in the brain that one might still consider mental in a broader sense.

how substance dualism might account for pure consciousness experiences. If, ordinarily, phenomenally conscious experience is filled with images or impressions of the physical, then one could explain pure consciousness experiences by claiming that the causal connection between the physical and mental realms (or at least the causal influence of the physical on the mental) is somehow temporarily suspended and thus phenomenal consciousness continues, but without any input from the physical realm and it is because of this that pure consciousness experiences are empty and are not of or about anything. Of course how the causal connection between the physical and the mental is suspended must be explained, but this falls under the general problem of explaining how there is such a causal connection at all and thus pure consciousness experiences give us no special reason to reject (or accept) substance dualism.

Efforts to get around this problem of causal connection fall into two general categories: idealism and physicalism. Both idealism and physicalism deal with this problem by eliminating one of the two substances and thus eliminating the problem of causal connection. Idealist theories propose that nothing really exists physically, despite any appearances to the contrary, and that everything is really just part of the mental. Physicalist theories propose that everything is really just physical and that there is no nonphysical mental realm, again despite any appearances to the contrary. The way physicalist theories get rid of the mental realm varies greatly, from denying its existence entirely to expanding the concept of the physical to include the mental.

Idealist theories (such as, for example, that generally found in the Upaniṣads) can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. Because of their nature, idealist theories are not restrained by the laws of physics as we understand them and thus there is significant room for explaining how pure consciousness experiences occur. One way to do this is to suggest that phenomenal consciousness is always present and that while phenomenal experience usually includes the illusion that there are physical entities external to phenomenal consciousness, during pure consciousness experiences this illusion is suspended, plus any thoughts, emotions, etc. cease, and phenomenal consciousness itself, in its pure form, remains. For those who are adamant that the external physical world is not an illusion, idealism is not a very appealing way to resolve the causal connection problem, but, regardless of one's views on idealism in general, idealism is capable of accounting for pure consciousness experiences.

This brings us to physicalism. However, the line between physicalist and nonphysicalist views of phenomenal consciousness is not always very neat or clear, as will become apparent, and thus, while proponents of the following views may often take physicalist approaches, many of the following approaches are also consistent with substance dualism and/or idealism (and some may argue that at least some of the views below might be better generally classified as such, but what is important here is whether they can accommodate pure consciousness experiences and not which heading they belong under).

Property dualist views are a prime example of a group of theories that does not fall clearly under any of the three headings (substance dualism, idealism, physicalism), although different versions of property dualism might fit more neatly under one of the headings than the others. Generally speaking, according to property dualist views, the mental and physical consist of different properties and neither is reducible to the other, yet both are ultimately made out of the same stuff, which may be mental, physical, or neither depending on the type of property dualism in question. Thus, as long as whatever this stuff is has causal powers, there is no causal connection problem because, at least at a low enough level, there is only one type of substance involved. One might wonder how a single type of underlying stuff could result in things as seemingly different as the mental and the physical (how, for example, the same stuff can be the underlying basis of both tables and experiences of pain), but regardless of one's position on this issue, pure consciousness experiences pose no special problem. Either one rejects the idea that a single type of underlying stuff can result in both the physical and the mental, including pure consciousness experiences, or one accepts that a single type of underlying stuff can result in both the physical and the mental, including pure consciousness experiences.[28] In fact, types of property dualism that take this single underlying stuff to be mental (or something mental-like) seem particularly

28 Of course one could take the position that the same underlying stuff can result in both the physical and the mental as long as the mental has some sort of content to it and thus pure consciousness experiences would pose a special problem. However, besides seeming ad hoc at least on the surface (why would the underlying stuff be capable of resulting in some types of phenomenally conscious experiences and not others?) any such alleged problem here can arguably be gotten around by bringing the issue of thalamic (and other types of) gating into the picture. For more on gating, see the discussion of global workspace theory below.

amenable to pure consciousness experiences because the question then becomes not how the mental can exist in a way that involves no content or additional properties, but rather how anything can have any content or properties beyond the mental itself (and whatever properties it may be taken to have). Thus pure consciousness experiences can be seen as the result of somehow extracting all of these additional properties or layers and experiencing this underlying mental stuff itself. Of course questions of how and why this extraction occurs remain to be answered, but to do so more than very hypothetically we first need better evidence and understanding of this underlying mental substance.[29]

One type of property dualism is a bit different than the other general types in that instead of positing that the mental and physical are both ultimately made out of the same stuff (be it mental, physical, or neither), this type of property dualism posits that both the mental and the physical are basic substances and that these two types of basic substances are capable of interacting even though they are different sorts of things and neither is made out of or reducible to the other. Again, however, pure consciousness experiences pose no special problem because, as with the type of property dualism that posits only mental stuff as the ultimate underlying substance, one only needs to explain how any additional properties are absent during pure consciousness experiences and not how there can be pure consciousness to begin with (rather only how one can experience it

29 Some understanding (and perhaps evidence, although that is debatable) of this underlying mental substance is already being developed through some theories of quantum mechanics. For a brief overview, see Van Gulick, Robert (2011) "Consciousness." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/consciousness/> at Section 9.5.

directly). This assumes, however, that the underlying mental stuff is "pure" in the same sense as pure consciousness experiences (or purer, if that is even possible). If the underlying mental stuff is not pure in this way, then it seems that pure consciousness experiences, due to their lack of any additional properties beyond any that phenomenal consciousness itself may be thought to have, is problematic because we are then talking about an experience that consists of fewer properties than the stuff from which it is made. Thus pure consciousness experiences pose a problem for any property dualist view that posits an underlying mental substance that is less "pure" than pure consciousness experiences and thus anyone holding such a view must either find a way to overcome this problem or revise their view in light of it. Given how little, if anything at all, is known about any such underlying mental substance that may exist, I will not spend time here suggesting ways in which a proponent of such a view might overcome the problem posed by pure consciousness experiences. If, however, such a view someday gains traction, this is a problem that will have to be addressed and surmounted if the view is to succeed as a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.[30]

Eliminativist theories of phenomenal consciousness are somewhat opposite to property dualist theories because rather than solving the causal connection problem by bringing the mental and the physical into the same realm, they simply deny the mental altogether. Some eliminativist views are more extreme than others, however, in this denial. While some outright deny the

30 It should be noted that this problem of pureness applies to other types of property dualism as well.

existence of phenomenal consciousness, others only deny more specific aspects of phenomenal consciousness, such as, for example, certain views or definitions of qualia or certain senses of the self. Pure consciousness experiences are a problem for many eliminativist theories, but so are all or most other types of phenomenally conscious experiences and so pure consciousness experiences do not tend to pose a special problem for many eliminativist theories. Quite to the contrary, however, the lack of awareness of any sort of subject of experience during pure consciousness experiences may lend support to eliminativist theories that suggest that the self (or at least certain conceptions of the self) does not actually exist. The issue of the self is certainly worth pursuing, but it will not be the focus here. Rather, the focus will remain on phenomenal consciousness in general and attempts to explain it, rather than specific components thereof.

Identity theories seek to remove the causal connection problem by explaining phenomenal consciousness in purely physicalist terms and without necessarily expanding the concept of the physical. Although there are different kinds of identity theories, the general idea is that phenomenally conscious experiences are nothing more than the first-person perspective of some physical occurrence such as, for example, certain neurons firing.[31] If this is the case, then pure consciousness experiences, like all phenomenally conscious experiences, just are first-person perspectives of a certain physical occurrence and pure consciousness experiences pose no special problem for identity theories. Of

31 Some try to argue against identity theories by saying that creatures without neurons could still be phenomenally conscious, but this is not really an argument against identity theories. Rather it is only an argument that neurons are not the right level to be looking at and that it must be something else, perhaps something subamotic, that is relevant to identity theories.

course, any complete identity theory will have to explain how phenomenally conscious experience can be empty in the way that it is during pure consciousness experiences, but any such theory will also have to explain how phenomenally conscious experiences can be red or painful or happy as well and again pure consciousness experiences pose no special problem (unless further research and understanding of the brain suggests otherwise, but we will have to wait and see).

Cognitive and neuronal correlate theories of phenomenal consciousness also fall clearly into the physicalist category, although they tend to be theories more of when and/or where in the brain phenomenal consciousness is occurring as opposed to theories that explain how it is occurring (except to the extent that this is explained via identity theory). Pure consciousness experiences could potentially go a long way toward supporting or refuting at least some such theories, but before this can happen more empirical research needs to be done to illuminate the physiological correlates of pure consciousness experiences in the brain. Some such research has already been performed and is presented in Chapter 2, but significantly more research is needed.

An example of the sort of impact pure consciousness experiences could have on cognitive and neural correlate theories can be found when considering global workspace theory. Thalamic gating plays a key role in global workspace theory and the lack of content in pure consciousness experiences could be because the content is "gated off." Gating will be discussed more in Chapter 4 in connection with representationalism, but, again, more empirical research is

needed before global workspace theory can be thoroughly examined in connection with pure consciousness experiences.

Intentionalist theories of phenomenal consciousness come in various sorts, but for all such theories intentionality plays a key role in explaining phenomenal consciousness. Many intentionalist theories are compatible with physicalism and this is generally seen as a strength of such theories, although some intentionalist theories are not physicalist and at least some that are are also compatible with idealism and/or dualism. Some intentionalist theories that are compatible with physicalism, however, attempt to explain away phenomenal consciousness, ultimately claiming not that phenomenal consciousness is identical to intentionality, but rather that all there really is is intentionality. In this way, such theories eliminate phenomenal consciousness and fall under the category of eliminativism, which has already been discussed. Representationalist theories argue that all phenomenally conscious experience is intentional and that phenomenally conscious experience (or at least part thereof, depending on the type of representationalist theory in question) is nothing more than a representation of (real or unreal) objects of experience. Given that pure consciousness experiences have no content and are not of or about anything, they pose a prima facie problem for representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness because they do not seem to be representational at all. Can representationalist theories overcome this prima facie problem? If not, then representationalism can not be a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness

because it can not account for all types of phenomenally conscious experience.

While I am certainly not the first to consider what impact pure consciousness experiences have on philosophical theories in the analytic tradition, such considerations are rare and I am not aware of any such consideration in connection with representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness. Investigating this issue will take some work, but before doing so it should be noted that even if representationalist theories can not account for pure consciousness experiences, this does not mean that intentionality can not play a key role in theories of phenomenal consciousness. According to higher-order theories of phenomenal consciousness a mental state is phenomenally conscious if it is targeted, via either perception (in the case of higher-order perception theories) or thought (in the case of higher-order thought theories), by another, nonconscious, higher-order mental state. Regardless of whether the lower-order mental state is targeted via perception or thought, the higher-order mental state is about the lower-order mental state in some way and thus intentionality is central to such theories. However, unlike representationalist theories, the intentionality involved is nonconscious, as opposed to part of the phenomenally conscious mental state, and thus pure consciousness experiences no longer pose a prima facie problem as they do for representationalist theories. As long as the perceptual mechanism in higher-order perception theories is capable of perceiving a lower-order mental state that is void of all sights, sounds, thoughts, emotions, etc. (and given how little is known about how such perception might occur there

is no reason currently to suppose that it can not perceive such a lower-order mental state) and as long as higher-order thought theories allow for something such as the higher-order thought referring to the lower-order mental state demonstratively, then either version of higher-order theory can account for pure consciousness experiences.[32]

0.5 Overview

I turn now to the question of whether representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness can account for pure consciousness experiences. I begin, in Chapter 1, by providing evidence that pure consciousness experiences do occur. While Chapter 1 does not provide an exhaustive list of all references to pure consciousness experiences, it seeks to show that such experiences should not simply be dismissed by showing some of the diverse time periods and cultures in which such experiences have occurred and even a diversity in the circumstances under which such experiences have occurred. I begin with Hinduism, whose texts provide references to pure consciousness experiences as far back as thousands of years ago. I start with the Upaniṣads because they are some of the oldest and most agreed upon texts of Hinduism. I also include references to pure consciousness experiences in the Yoga Sūtras, an ancient text from the Yoga branch of Hinduism, as well as some more contemporary references to pure consciousness experiences. Most of these more contemporary references come

32 I would like to thank Robert Van Gulick's "Consciousness" entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for helping to jog my memory during the writing of this section.

from practitioners of Transcendental Meditation. Because Transcendental Meditation, while based on ancient Hindu texts, was developed in the 1900s for a primarily North American and European audience, the terminology used in explaining pure consciousness experiences will be much more familiar to analytic philosophers and thus provide what many will find to be much more clear and blatant accounts of pure consciousness experiences, which will be useful for anyone not already familiar with Hinduism and its terminology.

Following references to pure consciousness experiences found in Hindu texts, I turn to other traditions in which references to pure consciousness experiences can be found, including Buddhism and the mystical branches of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Pure consciousness experiences are not only found within meditative or religious traditions, but can also occur as the result of psychedelic drug use and I thus also provide evidence of pure consciousness experiences resulting from such drug use.

After providing such diverse evidence of pure consciousness experiences, I defend the existence of such experiences against those who remain skeptical of their occurrence despite such diverse evidence. I focus this defense on the skepticism of Steven T. Katz. Despite this focus, the defense applies to all who raise doubts about the existence of pure consciousness experiences. I will not get into this defense now except to point out, as I do again at the end of Chapter 1, that one should keep in mind that they do not need to find all references to pure consciousness experiences convincing. Rather, one needs only to accept that pure

consciousness experiences have occurred (or even that just one such experience has occurred). As long as pure consciousness experiences have occurred at all, even if they are not as widespread as suggested, they pose a prima facie problem for representationalism and must be accounted for by representationalism (or at least by some specific version of representationalism) if representationalism is to be a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

Having provided evidence of and defended the existence of pure consciousness experiences Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 I provide an overview of empirical studies on pure consciousness experiences that seek to establish the physiological correlates of such experiences. Unfortunately, such available empirical studies are few in number and, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, are often of questionable quality. None of the arguments made regarding representationalism's ability to account for pure consciousness experiences turn on evidence provided by these empirical studies, but I include them anyway because, despite their flaws, they do suggest that at least some physiological changes accompany pure consciousness experiences and thus lend support to the bodily sensations account of pure consciousness experiences that will be presented in Chapter 4. One could reject all of the empirical studies in Chapter 2 and still accept this bodily sensations account, but at least being aware of physiological changes that might, and seemingly do, accompany pure consciousness experiences gives some additional reason to accept this bodily sensations account and thus I include the empirical studies despite their small numbers and the

questionable methodology of at least some of them. These empirical studies are also useful in, although again not essential to, the discussion of whether a representationalist approach to emotions can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences and this is thus another reason to include these studies despite some of their problems.

I begin Chapter 3 by providing an overview of general types of representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness and explaining why, when it comes to accounting for pure consciousness experiences, we need only further consider strong representationalism (which I distinguish from what I call extra strong, weak, and extra weak representationalism). I then explain the motivations for a representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness, followed by a defense of strong representationalism against some of the arguments that have been brought against it.

Chapter 4 is where the examination of the ability of representationalism to account for pure consciousness experiences begins. I provide a thorough examination of Michael Tye's strong representationalist theory of phenomenal consciousness. I focus on Tye because he provides what may be by far the most thorough account of representationalism and the ways in which it arguably succeeds in accommodating numerous types of phenomenally conscious experiences. This discussion of Tye's strong representationalist theory includes his representationalist accounts of veridical perception, bodily sensations, emotions, moods, illusions, and hallucinations. Following this examination of

Tye's strong representationalist theory, I consider ways in which representationalism might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences that were not already brought up in the discussion of Tye's strong representationalist theory.

By the end of Chapter 4 we are left with three general ways in which representationalism might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences: via a bodily sensations approach, via an illusions approach, or via what I call a "mysterious entities" approach. I say "general ways" in which representationalism might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences because, as we will see, both the illusions approach and the mysterious entities approach involve two distinct ways in which they might account for pure consciousness experiences. As will be shown, however, each of these ways of accounting for pure consciousness experiences - via bodily sensations, via illusions, and via mysterious entities - is not without its costs and some of these costs may be more than many are willing to accept.

While representationalists think that representationalism is key (or at least a key, depending on the type of representationalism in question) to phenomenal consciousness, representationalists generally agree that not all representations are phenomenally conscious and suggest various ways in which representations that are phenomenally conscious can be delineated from representations that are not phenomenally conscious. In Chapter 5, I examine various candidates for such delineation and consider whether any such delineation is successful when it comes

to pure consciousness experiences. Again the focus is on Tye, and his well worked out PANIC approach. The success of Tye's PANIC approach is questionable at best when it comes to pure consciousness experiences and I thus consider other options for delineating which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not, including those proposed by Fred Dretske and William Lycan. Ultimately it seems that there are ways to delineate which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not that are consistent with a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences and thus problems of delineation do not provide reason to reject a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences.

In Chapter 6 I consider, if we do accept a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences, what impact such experiences have on some of the debates commonly found in literature on representationalism. The debates considered in this chapter include the debate over whether the content of experience is conceptual or nonconceptual, the debate over whether the content of experience is narrow or wide, the debate over whether phenomenal consciousness can be reduced to the physical, and the debate over whether representations are pure or impure.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I begin by summarizing the various ways of accounting for pure consciousness experiences using a representationalist approach to phenomenal consciousness and the benefits and costs of each. I then suggest which of these possible ways is preferable and which should probably not

be considered serious candidates. I conclude by arguing that despite the possible ways in which representationalism might account for pure consciousness experiences, representationalist accounts of pure consciousness experiences should ultimately be rejected and that, therefore, representationalism is not a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

Chapter 1

Evidence of Pure Consciousness Experiences

I begin this chapter by presenting textual and testimonial evidence of pure consciousness experiences. While the texts and testimonies provided here are not meant to be exhaustive of the numerous accounts of pure consciousness experiences, they do demonstrate the diversity of cultures, time periods, and circumstances in which pure consciousness experiences have occurred. References to pure consciousness experiences are similarly diverse, ranging from references that may be quite cryptic to many, one such reference involving "cross[ing] all the frightful rivers,"[33] to references that use terminology that most will find much more familiar, such as study participants describing the experience as one in which they were "'completely awake, the awareness was there, very clear, but it was empty of any content, just pure consciousness in itself'" and as involving "'no ... desires or wants, only a balanced state of fulfillment that just *is* - *being* beyond change, time, and space.'"[34]

In presenting references to pure consciousness experiences, I follow a vaguely chronological order. I begin with Hinduism, starting with the Upaniṣads, some of the most ancient and agreed upon texts of Hinduism, and ending with the contemporary reports of the above-mentioned study participants. Following this I move on to Buddhism, which, like Hinduism, is known for its meditative

33 This reference comes from the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad. See below at p.42-43.

34 These descriptions come from participants in a 1979 study by Carl Jacob Severeide. See below at p.47-48.

practices, and present some references to pure consciousness experiences found in Buddhist texts. I then turn to Judaic, Christian, and Islamic mysticism, which also provide evidence of pure consciousness experiences. Finally, I look at evidence of pure consciousness experiences resulting from the use of psychedelic drugs.

After presenting some of the many references to pure consciousness experiences that can be found, I address the concerns of people, such as Steven T. Katz, who deny the existence of pure consciousness experiences despite such references. After reading these various reports and descriptions of pure consciousness experiences and considering the arguments against positions such as Katz's, one should find it difficult to deny that pure consciousness experiences do occur.

1.1 Hinduism

There is significant disagreement about and lack of knowledge with regard to even when Hinduism began, let alone when the various Hindu texts were written, what order they were written in, who the authors of the texts were, what sort of contact the authors may have had with other authors or other schools of thought, etc. While more seems to be known about some texts and authors than others, my concern here is not to disentangle the history of Hinduism (nor its connection to the beginnings of Buddhism), but rather only to take note of some of the references to pure consciousness within the various texts. Most references to pure consciousness, however, are far from obvious, especially to one unfamiliar

the sort of ontology found in Hindu thought.[35] As one of the more extreme examples, the Bhagavad Gita attempts to explain much of this ontology, including pure consciousness, yet I will not mention it below because any quote would be so out of context as to be nearly useless. Instead the (rather lengthy) text arguably must be read and considered as a whole if one is to entertain the hope of understanding it.

Below I provide some of the clearest references to pure consciousness in Hindu texts that might be understood out of context. Even these references, however, must often be supplemented with explanation. In attempting to explain these references I also attempt to simplify them for the reader unfamiliar with the associated ontology. In doing so I undoubtedly leave out many nuances, some more significant than others. I encourage anyone who is interested to read these texts and some of the many commentaries themself. Here, however, I seek only to establish that the texts do talk about pure consciousness. When it comes to the more contemporary writings, references to and descriptions of pure consciousness experiences will be much more clear and apparent and the skeptic should certainly not dismiss the actuality of pure consciousness experiences prior to reading these more contemporary accounts. I begin, however, with the ancient and foundational Upaniṣads.

One of the clearer references to pure consciousness found in the Upaniṣads can be found in Section 24.1 of part seven of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, which

35 A primary reason for this lack of obviousness is undoubtedly due to the incredible difficulty in explaining pure consciousness experiences through the use of words.

talks about "[w]here one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else."[36] The phrase "sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else" refers both to the exclusion of all things, such as sight, sound, and understanding, from pure consciousness experiences and also to the ontological view that having a pure consciousness experience can lead one to have.[37] This ontological view involves understanding everything as being all ultimately the same thing. All of the apparent differences that appear in daily life (e.g., the difference between me and you, the difference between me and a tree, the difference between you and gravity, the difference between happiness and sorrow, etc., etc.) are not really ultimately differences at all because everything is part of the same all encompassing oneness. During pure consciousness experiences, one, in a sense, experiences this universal oneness directly and thus there is nothing *else* to be perceived or understood; there is no object to be perceived or understood nor is there a subject to do the perceiving or understanding.

This idea is also found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which provides another clearer reference to pure consciousness. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad talks about the absence of thought and perception during pure consciousness experiences using a series of questions to make the point. In section 4.14 of part two, after pointing out that "when there is a duality of some kind, then the one can smell the other, the one can see the other, the one can hear the other, the one can

36 Hume, Robert Ernest (1921) *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*. Oxford University Press at 260.

37 Whether one has exactly this ontological view and/or actually believes in such an ontological view is another matter. Further, it should be noted that one does not and, given the nature of pure consciousness experiences, can not have a reflective, intellectual awareness or understanding of this ontological view until after the experience has ended.

greet the other, the one can think of the other, and the one can perceive the other,"[38] the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad goes on to ask, "When, however, the Whole has become one's very self (*atman*), then who is there for one to smell and by what means? Who is there for one to see and by what means? Who is there for one to hear and by what means? Who is there for one to greet and by what means? Who is there for one to think of and by what means? Who is there for one to perceive and by what means?"[39] (emphasis supplied) These questions are not meant to be answered, but are meant to point out that there are no such things as smelling, seeing, thinking, etc. during pure consciousness experiences. During pure consciousness experiences there is neither a self nor an other and thus there is nothing to be smelled and no one and nothing to do the smelling, nothing to be seen and no one and nothing to do the seeing, etc.

Not all references to pure consciousness in the Upaniṣads are as clear or obvious. For example, the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, in sections four and nine of part two says, "Before they reach it, words turn back, together with the mind; One who knows that bliss of *brahman*, he is never afraid."[40] (emphasis supplied) Brahman refers to the all encompassing oneness and the bliss or lack of fear involves the comfort that comes from knowing that everything is one and the same and there is thus nothing to fear because all anything is, ever was, or ever will be is all the same and all one. The earlier parts of these passages more clearly reference pure consciousness experiences. Pure consciousness experiences are extraordinarily

38 Olivelle, Patrick (1998) *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*. Oxford University Press at 69.
39 Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* at 69-71.
40 Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* at 303, 307.

difficult to describe in words and thus the experience is one from which "words turn back." Another way of interpreting this phrase (and perhaps both interpretations are intended) is as explaining pure consciousness experiences as being free from all words, given that there is no language during such experiences. The phrase "together with the mind" also indicates the emptiness of pure consciousness experiences, which are devoid of all typical mental content, including all thoughts, sights, sounds, emotions, etc. The mind is neither equivalent to nor necessarily coextensive with phenomenal consciousness and thus the mind can turn back while consciousness remains. That from which "words turn back, together with the mind," especially when coupled with mention of Brahman and lack of fear, demonstrates reference to pure consciousness experience.

The final Upaniṣad I will mention also refers to the idea of fear in its less than obvious reference to pure consciousness experiences. This reference, found in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, does not describe or explain pure consciousness experiences themselves, but rather tells us that such experiences can be achieved through proper meditation. The Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad provides rather specific instructions for meditating in a way that will successfully lead to a pure consciousness experience and these instructions include things such as "keep[ing] [one's] mind vigilantly under control"[41] (section nine of part two) and choosing a location that is "[l]evel and clean; free of gravel, fire, and sand; ... [and in] a cave

41 Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* at 419.

or a nook sheltered from the wind" (section ten of part two).[42] Section eight of part two tells us that we can reach pure consciousness through such proper meditation: "When he keeps his body straight, with the three sections erect, and draws the senses together with the mind into his heart, a wise man shall cross all the frightful rivers with the boat consisting of that formulation (*brahman*)."[43] (emphasis supplied) An alternative translation words the same section as follows: "Holding his body steady with the three [upper parts] erect, And causing the senses with the mind to enter into the heart, A wise man with the Brahma-boat should cross over All the fear-bringing streams."[44] (brackets Hume's)

This passage again involves the comfort and lack of fear that comes from realizing that everything is ultimately one and the same. The world as it is experienced in daily life, however, is not free of fear and one might fear a wide variety of things (starvation, loss, and death being just some examples). However, one can cross over these "frightful rivers" (or "fear-bringing streams") of daily experience through proper meditation,[45] achieving a pure consciousness experience and thereby reaching the bliss of Brahman.

Pure consciousness also plays a central role in the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, but, while arguably less cryptic than the Upaniṣads, blatant, quotable references to pure consciousness are still difficult to come by. Patañjali explains that "Yoga is

42 Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* at 419.
43 Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* at 419.
44 Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* at 398.
45 The reference to "the boat consisting of that formulation (*brahman*)" or "the Brahma-boat" is a reference to a certain component of proper meditation. Because this component of proper meditation is irrelevant for present purposes I will not get into the issue of to what exactly is being referred.

the stilling of the changing states of the mind"[46],[47] (emphasis removed) and that the changing states of the mind "are stilled by practice and dispassion."[48] Patañjali groups the changing states of the mind into five categories: "right knowledge [which 'consists of sense perception, logic, and verbal testimony'[49]], error, imagination, sleep, and memory."[50] All states of the mind are encompassed by these five categories.[51] "Upon the cessation of [all such things, including even 'the thought of terminating all thoughts'[52]], seedless meditative absorption, ensues."[53] This seedless meditative absorption is "the end of the road of the yogic process outlined by Patañjali"[54] (emphasis removed) and, void of all mental content, is pure consciousness.

Much more recent writings also talk about pure consciousness experiences. In *The Divine Life*, Sri Aurobindo talks about "[o]ur mental consciousness ... los[ing] its own way and means of knowledge and tend[ing] towards inactivity or cessation."[55] When this occurs, "it [i.e., our mental consciousness] loses ... or tends to have no further hold on its former contents, no continuing conception of the reality of that which once was to it all that was real ... ."[56] Earlier in *The Divine Life* Aurobindo writes, "And the mind when it

46 Bryant, Edwin F. (2009) *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*. North Point Press at 10/I.2.
47 Again here the mind is neither equivalent to nor necessarily coextensive with phenomenal consciousness.
48 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 47/I.12.
49 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 32/I.7.
50 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 32/I.6.
51 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 32.
52 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 162.
53 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 164/I.51.
54 Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* at 164.
55 Aurobindo, Sri (2005) *The Divine Life*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram at 664.
56 Aurobindo, *The Divine Life* at 664.

passes those gates suddenly, without intermediate transitions, receives a sense of the unreality of the world and the sole reality of the Silence which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which a human mind is capable."[57] Although this is an again less than blatant example, Aurobindo is referring to a pure consciousness experience.

Another more recent example of writings that discuss pure consciousness experiences, and one that is much more explicit, comes from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation, which "is based on the ancient Vedic tradition of enlightenment in India."[58],[59] Mahesh Yogi describes a state in which "the experiencer or mind is left awake in full awareness of itself without any experience of any object. The conscious mind reaches the state of pure consciousness ... ."[60] Mahesh Yogi describes this state in significant detail:

> [W]e will reach a state of consciousness where the experiencer no longer experiences.
>
> The word experiencer implies a relative state; it is a relative word. For the experiencer to exist there has to be an object of experience. The experiencer and the object of experience are both relative. When we have transcended the experience of the subtlest object, the experiencer is left by himself without an experience, without an object of experience

57 Aurobindo, *The Divine Life* at 26.
58 Maharishi Foundation USA (2013) <http://www.tm.org/meditation-techniques>.
59 The Vedas are "the earliest and most basic scriptures of Hinduism." Gupta, Bina (2003) Cit: *Consciousness*. Oxford University Press at 15.
60 Mahesh Yogi, *The Science of Being and Art of Living* at 28.

and without the process of experiencing. When the subject is left without an object of experience, having transcended the subtlest state of the object, he steps out of the process of experiencing and arrives at the state of Being. The mind is then found in the state of Being which is beyond the relative field.

The state of Being is neither a state of objective nor subjective existence, because both of these states belong to the relative field of life. When the subtlest state of objective experience has been transcended, then the individual's subjectivity merges into the Transcendent. This state of consciousness is known as pure existence, the state of absolute Being.

This is how, by bringing the attention to the field of the Transcendent, it is possible to contact and experience Being. It cannot be experienced on the level of thinking because, as far as thinking goes, it is still a field of relative existence; the whole field of sensory perception lies within relative existence.

The transcendental state of Being lies beyond all seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting - beyond all thinking and beyond all feeling. This state of the unmanifested, absolute, pure consciousness of Being is the ultimate state in life. It is easily experienced through the system of transcendental

meditation.[61]

Finally in connection with Hinduism, I present quotes from practitioners of Transcendental Meditation that had pure consciousness experiences while participating in a 1979 study by Carl Jacob Severeide.[62],[63] One subject describes a pure consciousness experience as follows: "'After the content of consciousness had faded away, suddenly the experience of pure consciousness came. Suddenly I felt that consciousness expanded, boundaries in time and space disappeared, and fullness, wholeness appeared, consciousness was completely without any content. I was completely awake, the awareness was there, very clear, but it was empty of any content, just pure consciousness in itself. When the experience was over I once again became aware of the sounds in the room, and the thoughts began wandering, ...'"[64] Another subject describes the experience as "'a state of complete rest, full consciousness without content and unbounded in time and space.'"[65] This same subject further says, "'during pure consciousness there is just consciousness present, no feelings of comfort or the like, just fullness.'"[66] This subject's descriptions of phenomenally conscious experience just prior to having

61 Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi (1963) *Science of Being and Art of Living: Transcendental Meditation*. Penguin at 51-52.

62 Severeide, Carl Jacob (1989) "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation." *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Program: Collected Papers*. International Association for the Advancement of the Science of Creative Intelligence. Vol. 3:1556-1584.

63 This study also includes measures of physiological changes during pure consciousness experiences, the results of which are presented in Chapter 2.

64 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.

65 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.

66 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.

pure consciousness experiences include "sounds stay[ing] more in the background and ... los[ing] sensation of the hands and the rest of the body"[67] and feeling "'that the thoughts ... faded away and that consciousness expanded.'"[68] This subject further says, "This state [i.e., pure consciousness experiences] is difficult to describe, but it is very distinct and clear .... .'"[69] Quotes from other subjects describing pure consciousness experiences include: "'...being aware of nothing, and yet this awareness is very alive...'"[70]; "'There is 'nothing' there, yet I am aware.'"[71]; "'...even if there were no thoughts or any other content in the awareness, I was awake, it was far from any sleep-like state.'"[72]; and "'There is no experience of desires or wants, only a balanced state of fulfilment that just *is* - *being* beyond change, time, and space.'"[73] (emphasis supplied)[74]

1.2 Buddhism

As was the case in the previous section on Hinduism, my goal here is not to disentangle the many versions of Buddhism, analyze their differences in vocabulary, or engage in a debate over the accuracy of or nuances in the various

67 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.
68 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.
69 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570.
70 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1572.
71 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1572.
72 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1572.
73 Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1574.
74 For many more descriptions of pure consciousness experiences see Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1570-1576.

translations of the numerous Buddhist texts. Rather, my goal is simply to use Buddhist texts as another source of evidence of pure consciousness experiences. Also similarly to Hinduism, and arguably even more so than in Hinduism, texts providing clear, explicit references to pure consciousness experiences are difficult to come by, but I here provide a few such references.

The Udāna describes Nirvana, which, as W. T. Stace points out, "is wholly inconceivable in terms of any ordinary empirical characters. It is ... 'not this, not that.'"[75]:

> There is, monks, that plane where there is neither extension nor . . . motion nor the plane of infinite ether . . . nor that of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, neither this world nor another, neither the moon nor the sun. Here, monks, I say that there is no coming or going or remaining or deceasing or uprising, for this is itself without support, without continuance, without mental object ... .[76]

The Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya (also known as The Heart Sutra) explains that:

> in emptiness there is no form, nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness;[77] No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; No forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind; No sight-organ element, and so forth, until we come to: No mind-consciousness element; There is no ignorance, no

75 Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 72.
76 Conze, Edward (2007) *Buddhist Texts: Through the Ages*. Philosophical Library at 95-96.
77 Most versions of Buddhism define Nirvana as not everything, including not consciousness.

> extinction of ignorance, and so forth, until we come to: there is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death. There is no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path. There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.[78]

1.3 Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Although far less common than in Hinduism and Buddhism, writings suggesting pure consciousness experiences can be found in the mystical branches of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Ayin, or nothingness, is central to Jewish mysticism. Ayin can be reached through contemplation and when "'one comes to the state of *ayin* ... [o]ne has no independent self.'"[79] (emphasis supplied) Ayin is "'that to which thought cannot extend or ascend,'"[80] "'is called the pure ether that cannot be grasped,'"[81] and "'is the totality of all existence.'"[82] Further, ayin is God: "'God ... is the annihilation of all thoughts; no thought can contain Him. Since no one can contain Him [with] anything in the world, He is called *ayin*.'"[83] (brackets and emphasis supplied) Daniel C. Matt describes the attainment of ayin through contemplation as a stage in which one "no longer differentiates one thing from

78 Conze, Edward (1958) *Buddhist Wisdom Books*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. at 89.
79 Matt, Daniel C. (1990) "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press at 139, quoting Issachar Ber Zlotshov (1817) *Mevasser Zedek*. N.p. at 9a-b.
80 Matt at 135, quoting Ezra of Gerona in Azriel of Gerona (1983) *Perush ha-Aggadot*. Isaiah Tishby, ed. Magnes at 39.
81 Matt, "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" at 130, quoting Moses de León (1911) *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*. A. W. Greenup, ed. N.p. at 23-24.
82 Matt, "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" at 130, quoting Moses de León (1911) *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*. A. W. Greenup, ed. N.p. at 23-24.
83 Matt, "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" at 130, quoting Moses de León (1911) *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*. A. W. Greenup, ed. N.p. at 23-24.

another. Conceptual thought, with all its distinctions and connections, dissolves."[84]

Christian mystic Meister Eckhart writes the following about a type of experience:

> '[T]he more completely you are able to draw in your powers to a unity and forget all those things and their images which you have absorbed, and the further you can get from creatures and their images, the nearer you are to this and the readier you are to receive it. If only you could suddenly be unaware of all things, then you could pass into an oblivion of your own body as St. Paul did. . . . In this case . . . memory no longer functioned, nor understanding, nor the senses, nor the powers that should function so as to govern and grace the body. . . . In this way a man should flee his senses, turn his powers inward and sink into an oblivion of all things and himself.'[85]

In another quote Eckhart describes an experience as "'well-nigh past self and all things, without will and without images,'"[86] as going "'past all created understanding to the circle of eternity,'"[87] and as being "'borne up unknowingly ... [and] transported ... beyond all conceiving.'"[88]

---

84 Matt, "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" at 135.
85 Forman, Robert K. C. (1990) "Eckhart, *Gezücken*, and the Ground of the Soul" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press at 103, quoting Meister Eckhart.
86 Forman, "Eckhart, *Gezücken*, and the Ground of the Soul" at 105.
87 Forman, "Eckhart, *Gezücken*, and the Ground of the Soul" at 105.
88 Forman, "Eckhart, *Gezücken*, and the Ground of the Soul" at 105.

St. Teresa of Avila, another Christian mystic, explains that at the highest point of rapture "the faculties are lost through being closely united with God. At that point ... [one] will neither see, nor hear, nor perceive ... ."[89] "'[W]hile it lasts ... none of the soul's faculties is able to perceive or know what is taking place.'"[90] St. Teresa further explains that during union with God "the soul ... has no power to think"[91] and thus

> [t]here is no need now for it to devise any method of suspending the thought. Even in loving, if it is able to love, it cannot understand how or what it is that it loves, nor what it would desire; in fact, it has completely died to the world so that it may live more fully in God. This is a delectable death, a snatching of the soul from all the activities which it can perform while it is in the body; a death full of delight, for, in order to come closer to God, the soul appears to have withdrawn so far from the body that I do not know if it has still life enough to be able to breathe. ... I believe it has not; or at least, if it still breathes, it does so without realizing it.[92]

"[A]s long as ... a soul is in this state, it can neither see nor hear nor understand."[93] St. Teresa explains:

89 St. Teresa of Avila (2002) *The Complete Works, Volume 1*. E. Allison Peers, trans. Burns and Oates at 126.
90 St. Teresa of Avila, *The Complete Works, Volume 1* at 126.
91 St. Teresa of Avila (1577/2007) *Interior Castle*. E. Allison Peers, trans. Dover Publications at 65.
92 St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle* at 65-66.
93 St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle* at 68.

> But now you will say to me: How did the soul see it [i.e., the truth] and understand it if it can neither see nor understand? I am not saying that it saw it at the time, but that it sees it clearly afterwards, and not because it is a vision, but because of a certainty which remains in the soul, which can be put there only by God.[94]

Writings from other Christian mystics also suggest pure consciousness experiences. For example, Jan van Ruysbroeck talks of mystical experience in which one is "'lifted above reason into a bare and imageless vision wherein lies the eternal indrawing summons of the Divine Unity.'"[95] Dionysius the Areopagite says that one "may attain unto vision through the loss of sight and knowledge, and that in ceasing thus to see or to know we may learn to know that which is beyond all perception and understanding."[96] Another quote from Dionysius emphasizes the difficulty in describing the experience referred to:

> Once more, ascending yet higher we maintain that It is not soul, or mind, or endowed with the faculty of imagination, conjecture, reason, or understanding; nor is It any act of reason or understanding; nor can It be described by the reason or perceived by the understanding, since It is not number, or order, or greatness, or littleness, or equality, or inequality, and since It is not immovable nor in motion, or at rest ... nor is It personal

94 St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle* at 68.
95 Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 172, quoting Jan van Ruysbroeck.
96 Rolt, C. E., trans. (1992) *Dionysius the Areopagite; The Divine Names; and The Mystical Theology*. Kessinger Publishing, LLC at 194.

> essence, or eternity, or time; nor can It be grasped by the understanding since It is not knowledge or truth; nor is It kingship or wisdom; nor is It one, nor is It unity, nor is It Godhead or Goodness; nor is It a Spirit ... nor is It any other thing such as we or any other being can have knowledge of; nor does It belong to the category of non-existence or to that of existence ... nor can the reason attain to It to name It or to know It; nor is It darkness, nor is It light, or error; or truth; nor can any affirmation or negation apply to It; for while applying affirmations or negations to those orders of being that come next to It, we apply not unto It either affirmation or negation, inasmuch as It transcends all affirmation by being the perfect and unique Cause of all things, and transcends all negation by the pre-eminence of Its simple and absolute nature - free from every limitation and beyond them all.[97]

In Islamic mysticism, Al-Ghazali writes in his autobiography that "'the end [is] total absorption in God'"[98] and that on the way to this end one "'rises from the perception of forms and figures to a degree which escapes all expression.'"[99] Ziyad B. al-Arabi emphasizes this escaping of all expression, saying, "'But if anyone asks for a further description ... let him cease to do that, for how can a

97 Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite; The Divine Names; and The Mystical Theology* at 200-201.
98 James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* at 392, quoting Al-Ghazzali in Schmolders, A. (1842) *Essai sur les ecoles philosophiques chez les Arabes*. N.p.
99 James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* at 392, quoting Al-Ghazzali in Schmolders, A. (1842) *Essai sur les ecoles philosophiques chez les Arabes*. N.p.

thing be described which has no description but itself, and no witness to it but itself, and its reality is known from itself ... ."'[100] Al-Ghazali explains that during total absorption "a man has so passed away from himself that he feels nothing of his bodily members, nor of what is passing without, nor what passes within his own mind. He is detached from all that and all that is detached from him,"[101] that if even "the thought comes to him that he has passed away completely from himself"[102] then it is not total absorption, and that in total absorption "he is unconscious not only of himself, but of his absorption."[103] Al-Ghazali further says that during total absorption "pure and essential Reality is manifested to"[104] the soul.

Abu Yazid al-Bistami talks about "'a domain where neither [good nor evil] exists: both of them belong to the world of created things; in the presence of Unity there is neither command nor prohibition.'"[105] Al-Bistami further talks about "'the stage of annihilation in God'"[106] and says that one """know[s] that he has attained real gnosis" ... "when he becomes annihilated under the knowledge of God."""[107] These words from al-Bistami suggest a lack of distinctions and

100Smith, Margaret (1972) *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*. Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd. at Section 17.
101Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* at Section 73.
102Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* at Section 73.
103Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* at Section 73.
104Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* at Section 73.
105Nicholson, Reynold A. (1922) *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose*. Cambridge University Press at 141.
106Nicholson, Reynold A. (1906) "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 303-348 at 326 quoting Abu Yazid al-Bistami in Nicholson's translation of the *Tadhkiratu'l-Awliya* of Faridu'ddin Attar at i, 160, 13.
107Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism" at 327 quoting Abu Yazid al-Bistami in Nicholson's translation of the *Tadhkiratu'l-Awliya* of Faridu'ddin Attar at i, 168, 24.

concepts, including the lack of an individual self. Ibn al-Arabi echoes this lack of an individual self, explaining that "'your "I-ness" vanishes and you know that you and God are one and the same.'"[108] Al-Arabi further explains this knowledge of God: "'He is and there is with Him no before or after, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor place. He is now as He was, He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness. ... '"[109]

The final passage from an Islamic mystic that I will quote here comes from a poem by Jalal al-Din Rumi. This passage mentions a lack of "'thought and expression,'"[110] but the reason I include it is that it emphasizes the extraordinary similarity (despite frequent differences in terminology) that is easily noticed among all of these writings from numerous traditions that are usually taken to be quite diverse. Rumi writes:

> 'Then came to Moses a Revelation: "... .
>
> ...
>
> I look not at tongue and speech, I look at the spirit and the inward feeling.
>
> I look into the heart to see whether it be lowly, though the words uttered be not lowly.
>
> Enough of phrases and conceits and metaphors! I want burning, burning: become familiar with all that burning!
>
> Light up a fire of love in thy soul, burn all thought and

108Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 212.
109Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* at Section 108.
110Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 215, quoting Jalal al-Din Rumi in Rumi, Jalal al-Din (1950) *Rumi: Poet and Mystic*. R. A. Nicholson, trans. The Macmillan Company at 170.

expression away!

O Moses, they that know the conventions are of one sort, they whose souls burn are of another."

The religion of love is apart from all religions. The lovers of God have no religion but God alone.'[111]

One might want to keep the idea of this quote in mind when considering Katz's position on pure consciousness experiences, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

1.4 Psychedelic drugs

LSD and psilocybin, and perhaps other psychedelic drugs as well, can produce pure consciousness experiences. For example, Stanislav Grof, a psychiatrist who has written extensively on the effects of LSD, writes that experience of "the consciousness of the Universal Mind"[112] is "one of the most profound and transforming experiences observed in LSD sessions."[113] During such an experience "[t]he illusions of matter, space, and time, as well as an infinite number of other subjective realities, have been completely transcended and finally reduced to this one mode of consciousness which is their common source and denominator. This experience is boundless, unfathomable, and

111Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* at 215, quoting Jalal al-Din Rumi in Rumi, Jalal al-Din (1950) *Rumi: Poet and Mystic*. R. A. Nicholson, trans. The Macmillan Company at 170.
112Grof, Stanislav (2009) *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous: The Groundbreaking Psychedelic Research into Realms of the Human Unconscious*. Park Street Press at 206.
113Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 206.

ineffable; it is existence itself."[114] Grof further describes this experience, alternatively termed the Void,[115] as an experience "of the primordial emptiness, nothingness, and silence."[116] The Void, Grof says, is "beyond time and space, beyond form or any experiential differentiation, and beyond polarities such as good and evil, light and darkness, stability and motion, and agony and ecstasy."[117] Further, the Void is described as "the ultimate source and cradle of all existence and the 'uncreated and ineffable Supreme.'"[118] Finally, Grof explains that adequately describing the experience is quite difficult: "Verbal communication and the symbolic structure of our everyday language seem to be a ridiculously inadequate means to capture and convey its nature and quality."[119]

While numerous writings on psilocybin talk about things such as changes in perception of space and time, a sense of unity, and loss of a sense of self, published reports of psilocybin-induced pure consciousness experiences have proven difficult to come by. A 2006 study by R. R. Griffiths, W. A. Richards, U. McCann, and R. Jesse reports that subjects given psilocybin "often described aspects of the experience related to a sense of unity without content (pure consciousness) and/or unity of all things."[120] However, none of the subjects' reports are provided and, unfortunately like many studies on mysticism and

114Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 206-207.
115Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 208.
116Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 208.
117Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 208.
118Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 208.
119Grof, *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous* at 207.
120Griffiths, R. R., W. A. Richards, U. McCann, and R. Jesse (2006) "Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance." *Psychopharmacology* 187:268-283 at 277.

psychedelic drugs, the results are presented cumulatively and thus while one can learn things about the characteristics of the experiences in general, one can not know which combination of characteristics was present in any given experience. Less formal reports of pure consciousness experiences caused by psilocybin can occasionally be found, however. For example, a participant in an online forum reports using strong doses of psilocybin a few times a year[121] and having "moments of darkness and void but no blackout. Awareness remains."[122] I am also personally aware of two other reports of psilocybin-induced pure consciousness experiences, with one of these people referring to the experience as "the hum" and the other referring to the experience as just "existence."[123]

1.5 Other?

It is quite possible that practitioners of lesser known religious or meditative traditions have undergone pure consciousness experiences as well. Further, there are reports of people undergoing other types of mystical experiences not connected to meditation or drug use. Such experiences include things such as a sense of unity, a sense of boundlessness, a loss of sense of self, a deep sense of peace, and/or other feelings or sensations commonly found in mystical experiences. While I am not aware of any cases of pure consciousness

121Toc (2010, September 27) "Re: ideal dosage ?!" Online forum comment. <http://tribes.tribe.net/psilocybin/thread/d9ad6f06-3290-4ed6-b3f8-f03feb4dc261> and Toc (2010, September 26) "Re: ideal dosage ?!" Online forum comment. <http://tribes.tribe.net/psilocybin/thread/d9ad6f06-3290-4ed6-b3f8-f03feb4dc261>.

122Toc (2010, September 26) "Re: ideal dosage ?!" Online forum comment. <http://tribes.tribe.net/psilocybin/thread/d9ad6f06-3290-4ed6-b3f8-f03feb4dc261>.

123The identities of these people will be kept anonymous.

experiences occurring independently of meditation or drug use, perhaps this is not outside the realm of actual possibility and perhaps has also occurred.

1.6 Do pure consciousness experiences really occur?

Despite the various texts and testimonies describing pure consciousness experiences, not everyone is convinced that such experiences do actually occur. Perhaps the most well-noted article arguing against the existence of pure consciousness experiences[124] is Steven T. Katz's "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism."[125] In "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," Katz argues against the "notion that all mystical experience is the same or similar."[126] What exactly Katz is arguing is unclear and open to interpretation, in no small part due to his failure to explain what he means by "mystical experience." If Katz is using the term mystical experience in a broader sense, then it is unlikely that anyone would disagree with his position because there are numerous types of experiences that might fall under this broader sense of mystical experience. For example, if one defines mystical experience in a way that includes experiences in which one loses the sense of being physically distinct from one's surroundings but still continues to literally see those surroundings[127] or experiences such as St. Teresa of Avila's in which she "saw Christ at [her] side"[128] and was "conscious of Him, [yet] neither

124Or at least interpretable as arguing against the existence of pure consciousness experiences.
125Katz, Steven T. (1978) "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. Oxford University Press.
126Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" at 65.
127See, e.g., Austin's description of what he calls "absorption" in Austin, James H. (2006) *Zen-Brain Reflections*. MIT Press at 334.
128St. Teresa of Avila (1960) *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*. E. Allison Peers, trans. and ed. Image Books at 249.

with the eyes of the body nor with those of the soul did [she] see anything"[129] and thus although her experience did not involve vision in the literal sense it still involved an awareness of herself as distinct from some other object of experience, as well as pure consciousness experiences, then it seems clear that not all mystical experiences are the same and Katz's position is extraordinarily uncontroversial. However, Katz might better be interpreted as making the much stronger claim that all experience is influenced by things such as culture, tradition, and/or language and that therefore there can be no pure consciousness experiences because any such alleged experiences must still be influenced by things such as culture, tradition, and/or language and thus can not be pure in the sense claimed. I will focus on this stronger claim because, even if this is not what Katz actually argues, one could make such an argument and the existence of pure consciousness experiences must be defended in light of such an argument.[130]

Katz argues that, despite reports to the contrary, in the case of every experience, "the experience itself as well as the form in which it is reported is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shape, [the] experience."[131] Because all experiences and reports are shaped in this way, there can be no pure consciousness experiences. Katz elaborates by saying

> what is being argued is that, for example, the Hindu mystic does

129St. Teresa of Avila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus* at 249.

130One familiar with Katz's argument might note that Katz's actual argument is weaker than the way I have worded this stronger claim. This is because Katz states his argument in a way such that the conclusion is, more or less, also one of the premises. However, because Katz's argument can be restated in a way that avoids this problem, I will ignore this problem here and instead focus on defending the existence of pure consciousness experiences against the better wording contained in this stronger claim.

131Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" at 26.

> not have an experience of *x* which he then describes in the, to him, familiar language and symbols of Hinduism, but rather he has a Hindu experience, i.e. his experience is not an unmediated experience of *x* but is itself the, at least partially, pre-formed anticipated Hindu experience of Brahman. Again, the Christian mystic does not experience some unidentified reality, which he then conveniently labels God, but rather has the at least partially prefigured Christian experiences of God, or Jesus, or the like. Moreover, ... it is my view based on what evidence there is, that the Hindu experience of Brahman and the Christian experience of God are not the same.[132]

Katz insists that the "process of differentiation of mystical experience into the patterns and symbols of established religious communities is experiential and does not only take place in the post-experiential process of reporting and interpreting the experience itself: it is at work before, during, and after the experience."[133] In other words, it is not the case that people in different cultures, etc. have the same experience, but report that experience in different ways due to differences in language, worldview, etc. Rather, Katz argues, the experience itself is also shaped by the person's language, worldview, etc. and therefore people that do not share language, worldview, etc. can not have the same experience.

Jonathan Shear responds to Katz by pointing out that

132Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" at 26.
133Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" at 27.

> [t]he defining characteristic of the experience in question [i.e., pure consciousness experiences] is the *complete absence* of any empirical content. So any experience correctly identified as of pure consciousness has no content at all to be 'shaped' by such things as language and expectations, or mark it as culturally determined in any other way. ... Another way of putting this is to note that if two experiences differ, at least one of them has to have some content, and could not properly qualify as a pure consciousness experience in the first place.[134]

While Shear is correct in pointing out that any experience that reflects one's culture, language, etc. is not a pure consciousness experience, Katz can simply respond by arguing that all experiences are necessarily shaped by culture, language, etc. and that therefore pure consciousness experiences can not occur. The question then becomes whether all experiences are necessarily shaped by such things.

With regard to this question, given that at least some reports of pure consciousness experiences resulting from psychedelic drug use seem to lack any relevant influence or shaping, Katz appears to be wrong that all experiences are necessarily so influenced or shaped. Given the position that Katz takes, Katz presumably has never had a pure consciousness experience himself and given how different and difficult to imagine pure consciousness experiences must seem to

134Shear, Jonathan (2007) "Eastern Methods for Investigating Mind and Consciousness" in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds. Blackwell Publishing at 701.

one who has never undergone such an experience, it is not too surprising that such experiences would seem impossible, especially if one lives in a cultural environment in which such experiences are rare (or at least rarely mentioned). However, one's own inability to imagine what such an experience is like does not mean that others have not undergone such an experience. For example, it is difficult (and seemingly impossible) for me to imagine what it is like for someone who has no visual experience at all and my best attempts (as of yet anyway...) still involve at least some visual component, but my inability to imagine a lack of visual experience is arguably insufficient reason for me to deny that at least some other people do entirely lack visual experience. Similarly, many people have never experienced synesthesia, at least in its more extreme forms, but this does not mean that no one has ever experienced synesthesia. Interestingly, it does not seem that people tend to deny that others experience synesthesia even if they have not themselves experienced it. Perhaps this is because people who have not experienced synesthesia have still experienced its components (such as sounds, colors, and/or tastes) even if not in quite the same way. Another possible reason for this lack of denial may be that it is at least somewhat more common to hear about such experiences than it is to hear about pure consciousness experiences and thus it may simply be (indirect) familiarity or commonality that results in this lack of denial in the case of synesthesia.

Another example (albeit significantly different in certain ways) that supports the idea that lack of familiarity results in denial involves socialized

healthcare. Growing up in the United States I was quite familiar with many Americans' ideas about the numerous problems with socialized healthcare, such as, for example, allegedly very long waiting times. After living in Europe for the first time and experiencing socialized healthcare for myself, I returned to the United States with what I thought would be irrefutable evidence that the general American perception of socialized healthcare was significantly wrong (as I had long suspected). However, to my surprise, rather than accepting my experiences with socialized healthcare as evidence that their own views were wrong, most people simply denied my experiences. Rather than accepting that (just maybe...) socialized healthcare did not actually involve all of the problems they thought it did, most of the people I talked to took the position that I must somehow be mistaken about what I experienced. While socialized healthcare is certainly quite different than phenomenal experience in many ways, the point remains that if something is unfamiliar enough to people and, perhaps especially, if people have preconceived notions to the contrary, they may still be unwilling or unable to accept something even in light of evidence that they are wrong.

Taking more uncontroversial examples, it would be quite strange for one person to say something like "I broke a bone and it felt like x" and for someone else, who has never broken a bone, to say "I have never felt like x and therefore you have never felt like x." Similarly, it would be quite strange for one person to say "I have been to Vanuatu" and another person to say "I have never been to Vanuatu so therefore you have never been to Vanuatu either." This is more or less

the point (or at least one of the points) that Robert K. C. Forman makes in his response to Katz's position. Forman describes himself as "a reasonably honest, reasonably sane, reasonably intelligent person"[135] and states "'I have undergone a pure consciousness event.'"[136] As Forman points out, "[i]f this will not count as counter-evidential ... , then what will?"[137] We typically do not deny that one has undergone the sort of experience they claim to have undergone and, other than lack of familiarity, there does not seem to be any reason for pure consciousness experiences to be an exception, especially when the claim comes from one who is "reasonably honest, reasonably sane, [and] reasonably intelligent."[138]

Further, as already implied, even if one's phenomenal experiences can never be proven to a third party to complete, or even near complete, certainty, there is no one in a better position to say what one's experiences are than oneself. Even if one is sometimes, or even always, wrong about one's own experiences, there is still no third party that is *better* able to say what one's experiences are like. Even if future developments in psychology, neuroscience, and technology result in third parties claiming to know what experiences another person is undergoing there will still be significant epistemological problems with such claims. I will not get into such problems here because, currently, such technology is unavailable (at least to a sufficient degree) and thus the best and most reliable source of information available about one's experiences is that very person's reports of their

135Forman, Robert K. C. (1986) "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism." *Sophia* 25(1):49-58 at 56.
136Forman, "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism" at 56.
137Forman, "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism" at 56.
138Forman, "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism" at 56.

own experiences.

There are perhaps times though when one is not a very reliable source of information about one's own experiences. If one is, for example, quite nervous or excited or scared, etc., this extreme emotion may cause one to inaccurately be aware of, introspect, and/or report their own experience or mental state. For example, perhaps I report that I am acting a certain way because I am feeling excited when I am really feeling impatient (perhaps in addition to my excitement or perhaps not). In such a case my impatience (and perhaps also excitement) is resulting in a situation in which I am not accurately aware of and/or reflecting upon my experience and am mistaken about what my experience is like.

Even in such a case, however, no one else is in a *better* position to say what my experience is like. Perhaps someone (especially someone who knows me well) will claim that I am feeling impatient despite my reporting only excitement. I might be wrong about my report, but the other person might instead be wrong about their claim. Perhaps, for example, I usually only exhibit the type of behavior I am currently exhibiting when I am feeling impatient, but this current instance could be an exception to that general rule and the third party is not in a position to know whether this is the case or not. Even if, for example, I am too emotional (be the emotion impatience and/or excitement) to reflect upon my experience carefully and increase the reliability of my report of my experience, I am still in no worse of an epistemic position than the third party, who is also unable to gain any better epistemic access to my experience.

In addition to cases of extreme emotion, there may be other cases in which one is not able to accurately reflect on or report their experience, such as, for example, when one is distracted. Such examples suggest that if one wants to question the reliability of first-person reports of experience, one should question more than just reports of pure consciousness experiences. Further, reports of pure consciousness experiences may be more reliable than reports in these other cases because pure consciousness experiences lack the types of problems mentioned. Pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of emotion and thus emotion can not cause one to be mistaken about or mistakenly report their experience as may happen in at least some other cases. Further, because pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation, there is nothing to distract one, to divert one's attention, etc. and thus, again, the types of things that may sometimes lead one to be mistaken about one's own experience are absent from pure consciousness experiences.

There is also some suggestion that reporting one's own experiences in general is problematic, at least to the extent that reporting one's own experiences involves introspection, as it at least often if not always does if one is to be aware enough of one's own experiences to report them.[139] This is because introspection involves changing the focus of attention, which can lead to things such as a change in the experience's emphasis (and thus its overall phenomenology), changes in the details of the experience, or even a change in how one understands

139If one is reporting one's experiences based on memory, then while one does not introspect the experience itself, one introspects one's memory of the experience.

the experience and thus the felt or emotional aspect of the experience.[140] There are two key things to take away from this.

One is that if one wants to be skeptical of or deny reports of pure consciousness experiences due to not trusting the reports of people who claim to have undergone such an experience, then one is casting their net much too narrowly. There is reason to think that all reports of phenomenally conscious experience are inaccurate and thus if one wants to deny reports based on fears or claims of inaccuracy, one must deny all first-person person reports and not just first-person reports of pure consciousness experiences.

The second, closely related, thing to take away from this is that the problems regarding introspection and the accuracy of first-person reports suggest that reports by experienced meditators, including reports of pure consciousness experiences, may actually be more reliable than any reports of any type of experience by anyone who is not an experienced meditator. This is because meditation causes one to better understand and more accurately be aware of their phenomenally conscious experiences. Advanced meditators are thus much better able to avoid the problems that introspection creates and accurately report their experiences.[141] Thus reports of pure consciousness experiences by advanced meditators are arguably more reliable than reports of any type of phenomenally conscious experience, including very common phenomenally conscious

140See, e.g., Marcel, Anthony J. (2003) "Introspective Report: Trust, Self-Knowledge and Science." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10(9-10):167-186 at 179-180.

141For more on this issue in general see, e.g., Lutz, Antoine and Evan Thompson (2003) "Neurophenomenology: Integrating Subjective Experience and Brain Dynamics in the Neuroscience of Consciousness." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10(9-10):31-52.

experiences, by anyone with little or no meditative experience.

Despite all of this, perhaps one still wishes to argue that if pure consciousness experiences really do occur, then either, one, the descriptions should be similar across individuals and cultures or, two, the descriptions should be explanatory and not full of riddle and metaphor, with the riddle and metaphor suggesting that the experiences really do not occur or, if they do, they are not really contentless as claimed. With regard to the difference in descriptions, one should keep in mind that such things are very common. For example, expressions indicating the same underlying idea often vary so greatly from language to language that if translated literally they make no sense at all. When it comes to phenomenal experience more specifically, things such as descriptions of colors are likely to vary greatly depending on the cultural and personal significance of the color to the person doing the describing. For example, a person from one culture might describe the color black as imposing or ominous, while someone from another culture may describe black as uplifting, and someone from yet another culture might describe black as tranquil or serene. Despite these significant differences in description, the experience of the color itself (as opposed to experience of one's emotional reaction to the color) is likely the same.

As for the claim that if pure consciousness experiences really do occur, then descriptions of the experience should be much more clear and explanatory and not so indirect or metaphorical, I challenge anyone taking such a position to describe the visual experience of color to someone who has never experienced

color in a way that is clear and explanatory and not indirect or metaphorical.[142] If one takes this challenge seriously, they will likely not get much farther than "It...it's...well...umm...." Tommy Edison, who has been blind since birth and has never experienced color, has created a series of videos "that reveal a glimpse into his life."[143] In one of these videos, Edison points out how unsuccessful attempts to explain color to him have been.[144] "What is it [color]?" Edison asks and continues, "Well, I don't know."[145] Edison says, "Over the years people have tried and tried and tried to explain color to me and I just don't understand it."[146] Edison points out how useless various attempts have been, such as trying to "explain a sense with another sense."[147] To such attempts Edison responds, "That doesn't make any bloody sense at all."[148] Edison also points out other strange sounding notions, such as that ice and the sky can both be blue. "I don't get it,"[149] he says about that similarity. When it comes to water being colorless yet the ocean being blue he says, "I don't get that."[150] Yet despite all of this, Edison does not deny that other people do phenomenally experience color. Similarly, a lack of clear, straightforward descriptions of pure consciousness experiences is insufficient reason to deny that some people have had pure consciousness experiences.

142For anyone who has never had a visual experience of color, another type of phenomenal experience can be substituted for visual experiences of color in this challenge, such as another type of visual experience or an auditory or olfactory experience.
143Edison, Tommy "About Tommy Edison." The Tommy Edison Experience. <http://blindfilmcritic.com/about-tommy-edison>.
144Edison, Tommy and Ben Churchill (2012) "Describing Colors to Blind People." The Tommy Edison Experience. <http://blindfilmcritic.com/archives/2771>.
145Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."
146Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."
147Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."
148Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."
149Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."
150Edison and Churchill, "Describing Colors to Blind People."

Further, demanding a clear, straightforward description of pure consciousness experiences seems to be demanding the impossible.

One might still object to reports of pure consciousness experiences on the grounds that, given the nature of pure consciousness experiences, such reports are based on memory of the experience and are not made while the experience is occurring, and there are concerns with the accuracy of memory. One making such an objection for this reason, however, should keep in mind the questionable accuracy of non-memory based reports, as already discussed, and thus while memory may add to the problem of accuracy, this problem exists even in the absence of the use of memory.[151]

Further, lots of reports of phenomenally conscious experiences are based on memory, so again pure consciousness experiences should not be singled out and anyone denying reports of pure consciousness experiences due solely to their reliance on memory must also deny reports of many other types of phenomenally conscious experiences. One might respond, however, that while many reports of phenomenally conscious experiences are based on memory there are also reports of these same types of experiences that are not based on memory and thus there is independent reason to believe the memory-based reports.

While this may be true of many types of experiences, it is not true of all

151 An argument can be made that even introspection-based reports of occurrent experiences involve the use of memory because while one is introspecting one is not actually undergoing the experience in question (or at least not undergoing the exact same experience) simultaneously with the act of introspection. I will not pursue this issue here other than to say that such an idea again calls into question the accuracy of reports of phenomenally conscious experiences in general and again suggests that pure consciousness experiences should not be singled out as uniquely problematic.

types of experiences.[152] For example, if one is rendered speechless due to, say, shock, this is a type of experience that can only be reported based on memory. Thus, if one wants to deny reports of pure consciousness experiences due to the issue of memory, one must also deny reports of what it is like to undergo an experience in which one is rendered speechless.

Another example of this type is the experience of coming out of general anaesthesia. When coming out of general anaesthesia one often goes through a stage during which they are aware of their surroundings, but lack the ability to communicate and neither communicate themselves nor understand what is being communicated to them. Despite this inability to communicate, there is still something it is like to undergo such an experience, including something it is like to lack the ability to communicate, and we do not generally deny reports of what this is like.

Being "in the zone" provides another such example. If one is, for example, particularly good and experienced at a sport, they may occasionally go through a period of time (during a game or practice) in which they are "in the zone." When one is in the zone they remain phenomenally conscious, but in a way such that they become, in terms of phenomenally conscious involvement, a witness to rather than an active participant in what they and others are doing. Their participation in and focus on playing the sport is so extreme that there is, in a sense, nothing left over to be actively aware of the participation and focus. It

152Further, there is reason to doubt the reliability of memory-based reports even when they are of a type of experience that can be reported as it is undergone. Consider, for example, the notorious inaccuracy and unreliability of eyewitness testimony.

seems that even awareness of oneself as a distinct entity may disappear. Further, when in the zone one can not report on their experience because doing so would take away from the complete immersion that is occurring and would mean that they are no longer in the zone. Again, despite this inability to report on the phenomenally conscious experience as it is occurring, there is still something it is like to undergo the experience that can be recalled and reported later, including an aspect of what it is like that involves what it is like to experience being in the zone.

These examples are cases in which, like pure consciousness experiences, one can not report on the experience while it occurs, but can remember and report on the experience later, including remembering and reporting on the unique aspects of that type of experience. How this occurs is another question, but it is certainly possible that there are nonconscious processes occurring that allow one to remember and later report on the experience. Further, like pure consciousness experiences, these examples involve reporting what a type of experience was like despite the inability to fully recreate the experience through memory. Thus any objection that reports of pure consciousness experiences are unreliable because they can not be fully recreated while reporting them applies to these other examples as well.

Not only that, but such an objection also applies to many other and more common experiences. Take, for example, the experience of pain. If one, say, breaks a bone, one can later use memory to report what the pain experience was

like even though one can not recreate the experience to its full, or even close to full, extent. Further, the more unique and significant the experience, the more fully and accurately it is likely to be recalled. For example, one might be able to recall the pain of breaking a bone more accurately than a minor bump on the arm. Similarly, one is likely to more fully and accurately recall their last vacation than an average week a few months ago and one is more likely to fully and accurately recall an experience of being in the zone than, say, an insignificant trip to the store. Given how unique and significant pure consciousness experiences are, they are, despite the inability to recreate them to their full extent, likely at least one of, if not the, most fully and accurately recalled of all experiences.

One final point with regard to memory: One might argue that reports of pure consciousness experiences are based on false memories (i.e., "memories" of things that did not actually occur). Given that memories of pure consciousness experiences are not void of any content as are the experiences themselves, if memories of pure consciousness experiences are false memories, then such contentless experiences may never actually occur.

Such an argument again unjustly singles out pure consciousness experiences as problematic. There is no more reason to think (other than a general refusal to accept the occurrence of pure consciousness experiences) that reports of pure consciousness experiences are based on false memories than there is to think that of any other type of memory-based report. Further, there are reasons to think that reports of pure consciousness experiences are not based on

false memories. False memories are generally reported to occur when memory of a certain (type of) experience is elicited. A common example of a false memory occurs in the case of one who undergoes counseling and is prompted, in a sense, to recall a past instance of abuse of some sort. While there are undoubtedly legitimate cases of repressed memories that are recalled with the help of counseling, the point here is that false memories tend not to occur spontaneously, but are rather created in response to prompting or elicitation by others.

Given the widespread reports of pure consciousness experiences in diverse cultures, in diverse time periods, and under diverse circumstances, it is unlikely that all such reports are elicited. One might argue, however, that being part of a meditative tradition that accepts and even seeks pure consciousness experiences is sufficient to elicit reports of such experiences. There are several responses to such a suggestion. One response is that even if the vast majority of reports of pure consciousness experiences are elicited, presumably at some point someone had a pure consciousness experience that was not elicited or else the idea (especially given the apparent limits of human imagination) of pure consciousness experiences would not have been known to begin with and thus could not have been used to elicit further reports of such experiences.

Another response is that, at least in some traditions, writings on pure consciousness experiences are too unclear and full of riddle to be used to or be able to elicit false memories of or false reports of pure consciousness experiences. One might object that although these writings may seem unclear or full of riddle

to some, they would or do not seem that way to someone who is part of that tradition and/or time period. So little is currently known about the time period and culture in which some of these writings took place that one can generally only speculate about whether this may be the case or not. However, there is reason to think that in at least some traditions this is not the case. For example, the cryptic koans of Zen Buddhism, while used on the one hand to help students advance in their meditative training and understanding, are also used as a test to see how much students have actually advanced. Thus, rather than eliciting false memories and reports of pure consciousness experiences (and other types of meditative experiences), koans are used, at least in part, to prevent such things.

Finally with regard to allegations of false memories, it should be remembered that not all reports of pure consciousness experiences come from people that are part of traditions that are aware of and/or accept such experiences. For example, some reports of pure consciousness experiences come from people who have used psychedelic drugs and are not part of any such tradition. Thus these traditions can not have resulted in the elicitation of such reports.

Given the numerous reports of pure consciousness experiences in different cultures, in different time periods, and as resulting from different causes, the occurrence of such experiences is difficult to deny. One need not accept any of the associated ontological views of the various traditions discussed to accept the experience itself. As has been argued, reasons for denying the experience itself are problematic and, to the extent accepted, often apply to other types of

phenomenally conscious experiences as well, sometimes including ordinary, everyday phenomenally conscious experiences. One then faces the choice of accepting pure consciousness experiences or rejecting a much larger class of experiences.

As long as any person ever has had a pure consciousness experience, even once, then any complete theory of phenomenal consciousness must successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. The evidence presented here suggests that numerous people have had pure consciousness experiences in numerous time periods, places, and cultures. At the very least, even if one retains doubt as to whether pure consciousness experiences have actually occurred, their existence is plausible enough to make an examination of their implications worthwhile.

Chapter 2

Physiological Correlates of Putative Pure Consciousness Experiences

Despite numerous empirical studies on the neurological and physiological effects of both meditation and psychedelic drugs,[153] such studies on pure consciousness experience itself are much harder to come by. This is likely in part due to the lack of guarantee that subjects will undergo a pure consciousness experience during the study. In the case of meditation, one would need to find subjects advanced enough in meditative training that they can undergo pure consciousness experiences more or less at will and thus undergo them during the study. Study methodology is another problem. Even when such advanced meditators are subjects of empirical studies, reports on the studies are often unclear as to what specific type of meditative state the subjects underwent and it is thus difficult to know in which studies a pure consciousness experience was achieved and in which studies some meditative state other than pure consciousness was achieved. Despite such problems, I here present four studies in which subjects undergo pure consciousness experiences or at least seem to undergo such experiences. As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this

153For example, a 1966 study by Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Hirai on practitioners of Buddhist Zen meditation shows changes in alpha waves during meditation and, in advanced practitioners, "the appearance of rhythmical theta train" (p.334). (A train is simply a section of the resulting data presented in wave form.) See Kasamatsu, Akira and Tomio Harai (1966) "An Electroencephalographic Study on the Zen Meditation (Zazen)." *Folia Psychiatrica et Neurologica Japonica* 20:4, 315-336. Many other empirical studies on meditation can easily be found. Numerous empirical studies on the effects of psychedelic drugs have been performed by the Heffter Research Institute and can be found at <http://www.heffter.org/research-hucla.htm>.

chapter is simply to provide some evidence, even if not conclusive evidence, of physiological changes that occur during pure consciousness experiences. As already noted, no arguments require one to accept any of the findings presented here, but such findings do lend some support to accounting for pure consciousness experiences via a bodily sensations approach to representationalism and are also useful in the discussion of whether a representationalist approach to emotions can account for pure consciousness experiences and I therefore include them.

2.1 Farrow and Hebert study

In a 1982 study, John T. Farrow and J. Russell Hebert sought to formally investigate "apparently spontaneous episodes of breath suspension"[154] during Transcendental Meditation, which they had noted during previous studies on Transcendental Meditation, but had not previously reported.[155] This study consisted of several components, two of which (experiments three and four) monitored respiratory activity during episodes Farrow and Hebert refer to as pure consciousness.[156] Experiment four also sought to test additional potential physiological changes during such episodes, including skin resistance, heart rate, and electroencephalogram (EEG) changes.[157]

Farrow and Hebert describe what they refer to as pure consciousness as "a

154Farrow, John T. and J. Russell Hebert (1982) "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 44(2):133-153 at 133.

155Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 133.

156Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 133, 134.

157Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 134.

state of complete mental quiescence in which thoughts are absent and yet consciousness is maintained"[158] and which is "characterized by the experience of perfect stillness, rest, stability, and order and by a complete absence of mental boundaries."[159] Farrow and Hebert further refer to pure consciousness as "a concrete experience of pure abstraction."[160] This description of pure consciousness seems consistent with the way I use the term, but the description of pure consciousness given by the subject of experiment four gives reason to think Farrow and Hebert's use of the term pure consciousness is not consistent with the way I use it. At one point the subject of experiment four describes her "pure consciousness" experiences as follows: "'the awareness becomes fully expanded and locks into place. Everything feels synchronous and complete in that state - the mind stops thinking, the breath is very light, the body seems to stop, yet awareness is full.'"[161] In referring to breath (and perhaps also in referring to body), it seems that the subject retains at least some awareness of her physical self and/or physical surroundings. If the subject were experiencing pure consciousness as I use the term, neither her breath nor body would be part of the conscious experience. In referring to her breath as "very light," it seems that the subject does retain at least minimal awareness of her self and/or her surroundings and thus does not have a pure consciousness experience in which there is no

158Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 133.

159Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 133.

160Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 133.

161Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 147.

awareness of self or the physical world. Given that Farrow and Hebert find this subject's description of her pure consciousness experiences to be consistent with their definition of pure consciousness,[162] it seems that at least some, if not all, of the pure consciousness experiences had by the subjects in experiments three and four of their study are not the type of pure consciousness with which I am concerned. Nevertheless, despite the monitoring of respiration in these experiments perhaps not being an example of a physiological correlate of pure consciousness as I use the term, these experiments still serve to demonstrate the existence of physiological correlates of unordinary conscious experiences achieved by experienced meditators during meditation that seem to at least be approaching pure consciousness experiences. I will now present Farrow and Hebert's experiments three and four and their findings of physiological changes during episodes of what they refer to as pure consciousness.

Experiment three included eleven subjects who had been practicing Transcendental Meditation for between six and sixteen years and all of which had "reported having frequent and sustained experiences of pure consciousness during meditation."[163] The subjects were instructed to push a button after pure consciousness experiences.[164] The subjects were not told that their respiration was being monitored and when questioned after participating in the experiment about what they thought was being monitored, only one of the subjects mentioned

162Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 147.

163Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 135.

164Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 135.

respiration.[165] During the experiment, eight of the eleven subjects "exhibited breath suspension episodes."[166] Of these eight subjects, 36 of their 84 button presses "occurred within 10 seconds of the offset of one of the 57 breath suspension episodes."[167] Given that these eight subjects meditated for more than 249 total minutes, Farrow and Hebert calculate that the "probability that 36 or more of 84 randomly distributed event marks would occur within 10 seconds of the offset of 57 breath suspension episodes ... is $p<10^{-10}$."[168]

Experiment four involved a single practitioner with sixteen years experience in Transcendental Meditation and consisted of six sessions over a period of four months. Each session involved the following: sitting with eyes open for approximately five minutes; sitting with eyes closed, but not meditating for approximately ten minutes; meditating for approximately thirty minutes; sitting with eyes closed, but not meditating for approximately ten minutes; and, finally, sitting with eyes open for approximately five minutes. The subject was instructed to move from one stage to the next via intercom.[169]

In three of the sessions the subject pushed a button after each pure consciousness experience.[170] Each button push occurred "immediately after a

165Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 136.
166Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 141.
167Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 141.
168Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 141.
169Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 136.
170Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 136-138.

period during which breath flow decreased to nearly zero."[171] During 87 total minutes of meditation, 96 breath suspension episodes occurred and each of the subject's 96 button pushes occurred within five seconds of the breath suspension episodes. Farrow and Hebert calculate that the chance of such button pushing occurring randomly is $p<10^{-10}$.[172] Farrow and Hebert further found that during pure consciousness experiences the subject's airflow did "not entirely stop, but rather continue[d] with high-frequency, low-amplitude fluctuations,"[173] that when meditating, but not experiencing pure consciousness the subject's respiration rate was still lower than when not meditating,[174] and that "[t]he remarkably sudden onset of reduced breath flow coincide[d] with the subject's description of the onset of pure consciousness experience" as sudden.[175]

In another session other potential physiological correlates of pure consciousness experiences were tested. Farrow and Hebert found that "[b]asal skin resistance typically increased before and during periods of pure consciousness and often dropped abruptly at the end of the periods"[176] and that the subject's heart rate was lower during pure consciousness experiences.[177] Farrow

171 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 144.
172 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 144.
173 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 144.
174 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 145.
175 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 144.
176 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 147.
177 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 147.

and Hebert also reported EEG findings that showed statistically significant "mean coherence[178] changes in the theta, alpha, and beta bands[179]."[180] Of the ten brain regions from which readings were taken, theta band coherence exhibited significant change in eight, alpha band in six, beta band in three, and delta band in only one.[181] "Coherence in the theta band was higher and less variable than coherence in the other bands before and during the first half of the pure consciousness period and did not drop appreciably until the offset of the period."[182] This change in theta band coherence "was much more pronounced on the left side of the brain ... than on the right side."[183] "Coherence in the alpha and beta bands was high before and during the first half of the pure consciousness period, decreased gradually during the second half, and then decreased abruptly at the end of the period."[184] Changes in beta coherence "and probably for alpha coherence as well"[185] were much more pronounced on the right side of the brain than on the left.[186] Whereas "coherence in the theta and alpha bands was high and

178Coherence is "a measure of the association between signals in a specified frequency band from different brain regions." Niedermeyer, E. and F. H. Lopes da Silva (2005) *Electroencephalography: Basic principles, clinical applications, and related fields*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins at 326.

179Delta, theta, alpha, beta, and gamma bands are all frequency bands with each band covering a different frequency range.

180Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

181Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

182Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

183Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

184Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

185Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

186Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.

relatively constant at the beginning and showed a marked drop at the end of pure consciousness periods"[187] in nearly all measured brain regions, "indicating widespread changes in coherence,"[188] beta band coherence "followed the same general pattern, but dropped markedly at the end of the pure consciousness period at fewer derivations, which indicates localization of beta coherence changes."[189] Finally, while "[c]oherence in the delta band was much more variable,"[190] Farrow and Hebert say that it "also dropped at the end of the pure consciousness period."[191] However, Farrow and Hebert also say that delta band coherence was variable enough that "it did not show consistent changes."[192]

Farrow and Hebert point out that these physiological changes are not consistent with states "such as drowsy-state sleep onset, sleep apnea, or epilepsy."[193] Although, as discussed above, the pure consciousness experiences monitored by Farrow and Hebert in this study may not refer to the type of pure consciousness with which I am concerned, this study does demonstrate the occurrence of physiological changes, both at the neural and other levels, during advanced meditative states, supporting subjective reports of atypical

187 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
188 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
189 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
190 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
191 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
192 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 149.
193 Farrow and Hebert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique" at 152.

phenomenally conscious experiences during meditation.

2.2 Badawi et al study

A 1984 study by Kheireddine Badawi and colleagues also found physiological changes during Transcendental Meditation.[194] Badawi et al were interested in expanding Farrow and Hebert's findings in experiment four beyond a single subject and while Badawi et al unfortunately do not provide a definition of pure consciousness, given this desire to follow up on Farrow and Hebert's study, they presumably use the same (or a similar) definition. Badawi et al used 54 practitioners of Transcendental Meditation ranging in age from 21-43 years old (with a mean age of 27.9 years) and who had been practicing Transcendental Meditation for between 16 months and 12 years (with a mean of 6 years, 5 months).[195] Similar to Farrow and Hebert's experiment four, sixteen of these subjects "were given an event marker button connected to the EEG paper record, and were instructed to press the button after each experience of ... pure consciousness."[196] The subjects were asked to sit with eyes closed for a period of 2-5 minutes and then meditate for a period of 10-15 minutes. Badawi et al also used two control groups, one of which consisted of subjects without meditation experience who also sat with eyes closed for 2-5 minutes and then meditated for

194Badawi, Kheireddine, Robert Keith Wallace, David Orme-Johnson, and Anne Marie Rouzere (1984) "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 46(3):267-276.

195Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 268.

196Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 269.

10-15 minutes and the other of which consisted of practitioners of Transcendental Meditation who were asked to voluntarily hold their breath as opposed to meditating.[197]

Eighteen of the 54 subjects showed a total of 52 respiratory suspension periods. These periods lasted from 10-44 seconds with a mean duration of 15.4 seconds. Of the sixteen subjects given an event marker button, six showed a total of 20 periods of respiratory suspension and 16 of these periods correlated to presses of the event marker button, with the button press occurring within 10 seconds of the end of respiratory suspension.[198]

EEG recordings were found to be free of artifacts in 19 respiratory suspension periods in 11 different subjects.[199] EEG coherence was computed and Badawi et al found a "significant difference"[200] in coherence between the respiratory suspension periods and control periods, reporting that the respiratory suspension periods "had a significantly higher coherence than each of the control periods."[201] Badawi et al note that "changes were found in total coherence over all frequency bands"[202] as opposed to Farrow and Hebert's report "that changes in EEG coherence were found in individual frequency bands."[203] Badawi et al

197Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 268.
198Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 269.
199Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 270.
200Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 270.
201Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 270.
202Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 272.
203Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring

further report that "an analysis of variance[204] with repeated measures of the power spectrum[205] ... showed a significant decrease in mean theta power[206] during the [respiratory suspension] period, as compared to the control periods ... with no significant decrease in other frequency bands"[207] and that "during the [respiratory suspension] period, the power in the alpha band increased and in the delta and beta decreased; and during the postcontrol period, the power in beta and theta increased and the power in alpha and delta decreased."[208]

Badawi et al also took electrocardiogram recordings during respiratory suspension periods, 50 of which were found to be free of artifacts. While a significant decrease in beats per minute was found between respiratory suspension and control periods, a similar decrease was found in control subjects voluntarily holding their breath.[209] Badawi et al further found no significant changes in phasic spontaneous skin resistance responses during periods of respiratory suspension.[210]

During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 272.

204 Variance is "the expected value of [a random variable's] squared deviations from" the mean. Larsen, Richard J. and Morris L. Marx (2001) *Introduction to Mathematical Statistics and Its Applications, Third Edition*. Prentice Hall at 218, 191, 192.

205 The power spectrum is "the Fourier transformation of the autocovariance function." The Fourier transformation "decomposes a function into its frequency components." Further, the power spectrum ... is always positive [and thus] the power spectrum is a measure of the strength of each frequency component in the autocovariance function of the stochastic process." (emphases removed) Gabbiani, Fabrizo and Steven J. Cox (2010) *Mathematics for Neuroscientists*. Elsevier at 259, 260.

206 "Summing the variance for all the waves in an epoch provides a measure of the power ... present in that epoch." Rampil, I. J. (1987) "Elements of EEG signal processing." *International Journal of Clinical Monitoring and Computing* 4:85-98 at 93.

207 Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 271.

208 Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 271.

209 Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 272, 272-273.

210 Badawi et al, "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring

While interesting, this study is not without its problems. As already mentioned, Badawi et al fail to explicitly provide a definition or description of pure consciousness. Further, data gathered from the subjects using an event marker to indicate pure consciousness experiences was not reported separately from the overall data and of the overall data it is not known which or how many periods of respiratory suspension during meditation also involved pure consciousness experiences. Despite these problems, the study does still indicate significant physiological changes during the practice of Transcendental Meditation by experienced practitioners.

2.3 Orme-Johnson study

David Orme-Johnson completed a study in 1981 that also used only a single subject and in which he "looked for evidence of ... [high] EEG coherence"[211] in different areas of the brain and "examined the relationship of these high coherence events to subjective experiences of pure consciousness."[212] Orme-Johnson's study was at least partially motivated by L. H. Domash's view that consciousness may be "'a long-range correlation effect in the brain associated with a physical parameter [coherence]'"[213] (brackets supplied by Orme-Johnson)

During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program" at 272.

211 Orme-Johnson, David (1989) "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject." *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Program: Collected Papers*. International Association for the Advancement of the Science of Creative Intelligence. Vol. 3:1699-1704 at 1700.

212 Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700.

213 Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700 quoting Domash, L. H. (1977) "The Transcendental Meditation technique and quantum physics: Is pure consciousness a macroscopic quantum state in the brain?" *Scientific Research on the Transcendental*

and Domash's suggestion that "the simplest picture of the mind gained from examination of the Transcendental Meditation technique is parallel to that of a physical field theory; thoughts are viewed as excitations of an underlying field, and the pure consciousness state corresponds to the ground or vacuum state.'"[214] Because of this, Orme-Johnson sought evidence of coherence in different areas of the brain during pure consciousness experiences with the idea that such a ground state would be "a state of maximum correlation of the activity in different areas of the brain - a state of total coherence in the simplest state of awareness."[215]

The subject of Orme-Johnson's study was a 27 year old teacher of Transcendental Meditation, but no information is given as to how long the subject had been teaching or practicing Transcendental Meditation. The study consisted of "a 5-minute period of eyes closed [followed by the subject's] usual Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program for approximately 40 minutes."[216] The subject was instructed to press a button "after examples of experiences pertaining to pure consciousness"[217] with pure consciousness defined as "the cessation of thought activity and the experience of a silent field of consciousness as the source of thought."[218]

Meditation Program: Collected Papers. Maharishi European Research University. Vol. 1:652-670 at 655.

214Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700 quoting Domash at 655.

215Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700.

216Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700.

217Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700.

218Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1700.

EEG recordings were taken during the study and Orme-Johnson interprets the results as "lend[ing] supporting evidence to the prediction that experiences of pure consciousness are associated with high overall EEG alpha coherence."[219],[220] Orme-Johnson addresses and dismisses the possibility that the high coherence found prior to the subject's button presses was due not to pure consciousness experiences, but rather the subject's intent to press the button. Orme-Johnson notes that "similar high coherence events occurred at other times...that were not associated with the button presses or artifacts"[221] and that the "subject reported that he had experienced pure consciousness many times in the session and pressed the button after only some of"[222] these experiences.

While Orme-Johnson's description of pure consciousness is vague, it seems consistent with my use of the term, especially if Orme-Johnson's description is not taken literally and thus pure consciousness as Orme-Johnson describes it does not involve "the experience of a silent field of consciousness *as* the source of thought," (emphasis added) but rather is interpreted as meaning that pure consciousness involves the experience of a silent field of consciousness *that is* the source of thought. If this field of consciousness is experienced *as* the source

219Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1703.

220One may have noticed that Orme-Johnson's original goal was to look for high coherence in general as opposed to only in the alpha band. While Orme-Johnson does not explicitly include coherence findings in other bands in his written report, his Table 1 suggests that coherence in delta, theta, and beta bands was significantly less than in the alpha band. However, the details of this experiment are rather complicated and I will not reproduce them here. It is enough for present purposes that Orme-Johnson's study suggests significant changes in the brain during pure consciousness experiences.

221Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1701.

222Orme-Johnson, "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject" at 1701.

of thought, then it seems that the experiencer would have to be consciously aware of it as the source of thought and thus the experience would involve thoughts and would not be a pure consciousness experience. Taking Orme-Johnson to rather mean the field of consciousness that is experienced *is* the source of thought means that this field of consciousness can be, or is, experienced, but without there being any occurrent thoughts as to what the field of consciousness is. This interpretation of Orme-Johnson's description is consistent with the other part of his description which defines pure consciousness as "the cessation of thought activity."

Although Orme-Johnson's experiment does seem to involve pure consciousness as I use the term, this study is also not without its problems. For one, there is only a single subject. Further, there were indications of high levels of coherence that were not followed by button presses. While the subject does report not having pressed the button after all pure consciousness experiences, it can not be known whether these experiences occurred when and only when the EEG recordings showed high levels of coherence nor whether these high levels of coherence occurred when and only when the subject experienced pure consciousness.

2.4 Severeide study

The 1979 study by Carl Jacob Severeide already mentioned in Chapter 1 clearly defines pure consciousness as I use the term. In this study Severeide seeks

to "carry out a physiological and phenomenological investigation"[223] of pure consciousness experiences and the study shows physiological changes during pure consciousness experiences. In addition to a control group, the study used subjects practicing Transcendental Meditation which were later divided into two groups depending on whether they experienced pure consciousness for at least 10 seconds during the experiment. This resulted in a group of 14 subjects who experienced pure consciousness for at least ten seconds during the experiment. This group of 14 subjects had an average of almost eight years of experience practicing Transcendental Meditation and had on average spent almost one year in residence courses during which time they practiced Transcendental Meditation more often than the usual twice daily sessions.[224]

In this experiment, subjects sat with eyes closed for 15 minutes, followed by practicing Transcendental Meditation for 30 minutes, followed by another period of sitting with eyes closed for 10 minutes. Subjects were instructed to press a button once if they began to experience pure consciousness, to press the button twice immediately after the pure consciousness experience, and to press the button three times if, after having pressed the button once, a pure consciousness experience did not occur. The instructions given to the subjects defined pure consciousness as "'a state in which you are conscious, but in which there are no thoughts, no sensory perceptions or anything else in the awareness.'"[225]

223Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1558.

224Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1558-1559, 1559.

225Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1560.

The control group did not have experience practicing Transcendental Meditation and "[n]o one in the control group thought that they had ever experienced pure consciousness."[226] Despite this lack of experience, members of the control group were read a description of pure consciousness and instructed to "'meditate and relax as much as possible'"[227] and "'try to get this experience [i.e., pure consciousness].'"[228] Members of the control group were also instructed to sit with eyes closed for 15 minutes, followed by practicing Transcendental Meditation for 30 minutes, followed by another period of sitting with eyes closed for 10 minutes and were also given the same instructions regarding button presses.[229]

No members of the control group reported having experienced pure consciousness during the experiment. Of the subjects that experienced pure consciousness during the experiment, these experiences only occurred during the period of Transcendental Meditation. Of the 14 subjects who experienced pure consciousness for at least ten seconds during the experiment, the number of such experiences per subject ranged from one to 29, with an average of 8.9. The average length of such experiences for each of these 14 subjects ranged from 10.5 to 20.5 seconds, with an overall average across these 14 subjects of 16.2

226Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1559.
227Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1560.
228Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1560.
229Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1560.

seconds.[230]

Monitoring of respiration rates showed that "[t]he periods of pure consciousness [as indicated by subjects' button presses] correlated completely with periods of markedly reduced breath."[231] Significant changes in subjects' heart rates were also found. In examining pure consciousness experiences that lasted at least 20 seconds and were preceded and followed by periods of at least 20 seconds that did not involve pure consciousness experiences (there were 27 such cases), subjects' heart rates were found to reduce by an average of 5.1 beats per minute during pure consciousness experiences.[232]

Severeide provides a detailed report of the study and the study lacks many of the problems found in the other studies discussed, such as an unclear or questionable definition of pure consciousness or the use of only a single subject. The main criticism one might level against Severeide's study is that subjects were instructed to press a button if they began to experience pure consciousness and to press the button again (twice this time) immediately after a pure consciousness experience and thus one could argue that the physiological changes reported could be a result of pressing or intending to press the button rather than of a pure consciousness experience. However, as already noted, Severeide separated subjects that experienced pure consciousness into two groups depending on whether the pure consciousness experience lasted at least ten seconds and it seems

230Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1564.

231Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1564.

232Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" at 1567.

unlikely that even if pressing the button or intending to press the button produced some artifacts any such artifacts would have lasted for a full ten seconds or more. Further, given that subjects pressed the button both before and after each pure consciousness experience, if artifacts were present, it would seem that they would have to be indicated both at the beginning of and at the end of the ten second or more period of time and such artifacts are not indicated in the study results. Rather, the study results indicate a single, sustained physiological change and not two separate physiological changes.

2.5 Summary

In all, despite some problems, these studies strongly suggest that there are physiological changes that accompany pure consciousness experiences. The most notable of these changes is the breath suspension that was found in all of the studies that tested for it. Reduced heart rate was also found in all of the studies that tested for it and although reduced heart rate was also found in control subjects voluntarily holding their breath, this does not take away from its correlation with pure consciousness experiences. One study also found changes in basal skin resistance correlating with pure consciousness experiences. Finally, although the EEG findings are inconsistent, there is still notable suggestion that significant changes in brain wave activity occur during pure consciousness experiences. All of this strongly suggests that there are physiological changes, likely including physiological changes in the brain, that occur during pure consciousness

experiences and, again, these changes will be relevant to the discussion of whether representationalism can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences.

Chapter 3

Representationalism

If pure consciousness experiences are not of or about anything, then representationalist theories can not account for pure consciousness experiences, but perhaps even though pure consciousness experiences do not seem to be of or about anything they actually are. I have described pure consciousness experiences as involving the "buzz" of phenomenal consciousness and nothing more in an effort to explain what such an experience is like to one who has never undergone such an experience. Another reason for describing pure consciousness experiences in this way is to suggest that although pure consciousness experiences seem to lack any sort of content, perhaps this is not actually the case. Perhaps the "buzz" of pure consciousness experiences is actually some sort of content. If so, then it is possible that the buzz, and thus pure consciousness experiences, are actually representational.

Even if pure consciousness experiences are taken to have the content of a buzz, accounting for pure consciousness experiences in representationalist terms will not be easy. When it comes to representationalist accounts of phenomenal experiences, some types of phenomenal experiences seem to be more apparently representational than others. Veridical experiences tend to be the least controversially representational, followed by bodily sensations. Emotions are less apparently representational, but, as we will see, Michael Tye makes a reasonable

argument that emotions are actually representational. Moods, however, are more controversial, as are afterimages and illusions, and representationalist accounts of such things tend to be much less convincing. Hallucinations are perhaps the most controversial of the commonly discussed types of phenomenal experiences and despite significant argument it is not clear that representationalists can successfully account for hallucinations.

Pure consciousness experiences pose an even greater problem for representationalism because, even if we take the buzz of pure consciousness experiences to be some sort of content, it is far from clear - and as we will see, even more unclear than in the case of hallucinations - what this buzz might represent. Further, as again we will see, possible ways of accounting for the buzz as a represented property tend to be very problematic and unappealing and on some accounts lead to a metaphysical picture that results in representationalism being insufficient to fully explain phenomenal consciousness.

In examining the ways in which representationalism might account for pure consciousness experiences, not only will I take the buzz to be some sort of content in an effort to help representationalism, I will also talk about the buzz in whatever ways are helpful to representationalism in the current context. I do this because such use of the buzz only strengthens my conclusion: Even with the concession that the buzz is some sort of content of experience and even with manipulating it in ways beneficial to representationalism, representationalism has significant and seemingly fatal problems. I could of course argue against doing

such things, but defeating representationalism even when giving it such help only serves to strengthen the conclusion of its insufficiency as a theory of phenomenal consciousness. Representationalism can not even succeed when given the benefit of the doubt.

So, if we take the buzz to be some sort of content of experience, and thus pure consciousness experiences to be potentially representational, what might the buzz represent? Before addressing this question, I will talk a bit about representationalism. I begin by distinguishing four types of representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness. Following this I discuss motivations for (different types of) representationalism and defend one type of representationalism in particular, strong representationalism, against some of the more common arguments raised against it. I defend strong representationalism in particular because, as we shall see in distinguishing the four types of representationalism, this type of representationalism is the only type that might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences.

3.1 Types of representationalism

Some distinctions among representationalist theories are better discussed after considering whether and how representationalism can account for pure consciousness experiences. (See Chapter 6 for such discussions.) The distinctions I will discuss now involve the relationship between representationalism and phenomenal consciousness more generally. There are

four such relationships, which I will call extra strong representationalism, strong representationalism, weak representationalism, and extra weak representationalism.[233] (Luckily these terms will not have to be remembered for very long.)

Extra strong representationalism is the idea that whenever there is representation there is phenomenal consciousness. Such an idea is generally rejected for making phenomenal consciousness too ubiquitous and I am not aware of anyone who endorses extra strong representationalism. Things such as smoke or mercury levels in thermometers are counterexamples to extra strong representationalism because such things arguably represent, but are generally not taken to be phenomenally conscious (and for those who do take such things to be phenomenally conscious, at least in some sense, the reason usually does not involve representationalism). Further, one could take the position that beliefs and judgments represent, but are not phenomenally conscious, that lower-level visual processing represents, but is not phenomenally conscious, that artificial intelligence systems represent, but are not phenomenally conscious, etc. and these are all reasons to reject extra strong representationalism. If pure consciousness experiences are not representational, then they have no impact on the truth or falsity of extra strong representationalism. If pure consciousness experiences are representational, then, because pure consciousness experiences are phenomenally conscious, extra strong representationalism remains viable, but the question of

233I have tried to keep this terminology reasonably consistent with already existing terminology, but given that already existing terminology is not itself consistent, complete consistency is impossible.

whether all representations are phenomenally conscious remains open. Because pure consciousness experiences can not advance this debate, extra strong representationalism will not be discussed further in any detail.

Strong representationalism[234] is the idea that phenomenal consciousness just is a certain type of representation, and this certain type of representation is often delineated in functionalist terms. Thus strong representationalism is an identity thesis in the sense that phenomenal experience is identical to representational content and phenomenal experience involves nothing more than representational content. According to strong representationalism, one's experience of, for example, a purple chair consists of nothing more than the properties of the purple chair; there are no properties other than the properties of the purple chair involved in the experience.[235] (This idea will be discussed further in the next section in connection with the transparency argument.)

For strong representationalism to remain a viable theory, pure consciousness experiences must represent. For any particular version of strong representationalism to remain viable, pure consciousness experiences must be consistent with that particular version's delineation of the type of representation that is phenomenally conscious. The focus here will be on whether pure consciousness experiences can be said to represent and, if so, whether they are consistent with any such delineation. I will not consider all options for such

234Some of the most notable supporters of strong representationalism have included Michael Tye, Fred Dretske, and William Lycan.

235I should note that while I attempt to provide examples of each type of representationalism not everyone, of course, agrees that these examples support the type of representationalism in question and arguments can be made that any given example actually supports a different type of representationalism (or even a position other than representationalism).

delineation because the goal is simply to see whether representationalism can account for pure consciousness experiences and not to see which particular theories of representationalism can and can not account for pure consciousness experiences. Of course, we could simply stop after addressing the question of whether pure consciousness experiences are representational because if they are, then at least extra strong representationalism succeeds. However, given that extra strong representationalism is generally rejected on other grounds we should consider whether a more tenable version of representationalism can be maintained in light of pure consciousness experiences.

According to weak representationalism,[236] there can not be a representational difference without a phenomenal difference nor can there be a phenomenal difference without a representational difference. However, unlike strong representationalism, phenomenal content is not identical to representational content. Rather, weak representationalism is a supervenience thesis and thus while there can be no representational difference without a phenomenal difference and vice versa, phenomenally conscious experience is not exhausted by its representational content and phenomenally conscious experience includes

236It is difficult to say who is a weak representationalist because defenders of representationalism often use wording that is consistent with both strong representationalism and weak representationalism and/or only commit to a certain type of representationalism with regard to certain types of experiences, such as, for example, visual experiences or veridical experience in general. However, although in this work I focus on Tye's strong representationalism, in some of his later work Tye seems to advance a weak representationalist position in an attempt to account for hallucinations. In a more recent work, however, Tye starts to back off of this position at least somewhat, offering an account of hallucinations that is consistent with strong representationalism. As another example, David Chalmers, although he leans heavily towards strong representationalism in his discussion of (visual) phenomenal representation, leaves open the possibility of weak representationalism. See Chalmers, David (2004) "The Representational Character of Experience" in *The Future for Philosophy*, Brian Leiter, ed. Oxford University Press, 153-181.

nonrepresentational content in addition to representational content. Examples of weak representationalism can be found in the form of two different modes of perception representing the same information. For example, one could both see and hear that a train is approaching. In such a case the representational content, that there is a train approaching, is the same, but the phenomenal content is different. As another example, one could both see and smell flowers nearby. Again the representational content (i.e., "flowers nearby") is the same, but the phenomenal content is different.

Examples of weak representationalism also arguably exist when only one mode of perception is involved. For example, suppose one does not take color to be representational (or at least not entirely representational)[237] and one lives in an environment in which ripe tomatoes are red and only red. When one has a visual experience of a red tomato, this experience also includes the representational content "ripe." However, "ripe" is not identical to red, but rather supervenes upon it. If the tomato is a color other than red, then the representational content "ripe" will not be included in the experience of such a tomato (and the experience may instead include the representational content "unripe"). In this way, although the phenomenal content is not identical to the representational content, a change in phenomenal content means a change in representational content.

Pure consciousness experiences, because they consist of nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz, do not come apart in this way. There is only one

237Ned Block, for example, suggests such a view. See, e.g., Block, Ned (2003) "Mental Paint" in *Reflections and Replies: Essays on the Philosophy of Tyler Burge*, Martin Hahn and Bjorn Ramberg, eds. MIT Press at 165-200.

component to the experience and thus there can not be a representational component and a nonrepresentational component. Thus, any weak representationalist theory that requires these two components fails in light of pure consciousness experiences. Any weak representationalist theory that allows for, as opposed to requires, these two components is viable as long as pure consciousness experiences can be shown to represent. However, pure consciousness experiences themselves will necessarily involve strong (or extra strong) representationalism and thus weak representationalism does not need to be discussed in addition to strong representationalism.

Extra weak representationalism[238] is similar to weak representationalism in that each takes the position that phenomenal consciousness involves both a representational and nonrepresentational component; however, extra weak representationalism is not a supervenience thesis and thus there can be a representational difference without a phenomenal difference and/or a phenomenal difference without a representational difference. Extra weak representationalism also includes the position that while all phenomenally conscious experience is at least partly representational, there can be components of phenomenally conscious experience that are not representational at all.

An example of weak representationalism in which there is a representational difference without a phenomenal difference can be borrowed from Tim Crane:[239] Consider having an identical pain in each ankle, but at

238Most anti-representationalists accept extra weak representationalism. For example, Block, often noted for arguing against stronger types of representationalism, does not deny that phenomenal experience is representational at all.

239Crane, Tim (2003) "The Intentional Structure of Consciousness" in *Consciousness: New*

different times. In such a case, the phenomenal experience of pain is the same each time, but the representational content is different because there is a difference in where the pain is felt to be located and thus also in where the damage to one's body is represented as being located. A similar case can be used as an example of a situation in which there is a phenomenal difference without a representational difference. Suppose that one injures one's hand in exactly the same way, in the same location, and to exactly the same extent on two different occasions, but the intensity of the pain is greater on one occasion than on the other. In such a case, the phenomenal experience is different each time, but representational content is the same because both experiences indicate the same type of damage to one's hand in the same location.

Because, again, pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation and thus lack any sort of separate components, any extra weak representationalist theory that requires such components fails and, again, discussion of pure consciousness experiences collapses into the discussion of strong representationalism.

Thus, given the general rejection of extra strong representationalism and given pure consciousness experiences' lack of components, the question becomes whether strong representationalism can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. In considering this question I will be rather charitable to strong representationalism (already beginning with the charitable concession of taking pure consciousness experiences to be representational at all) and will

Philosophical Perspectives, Quentin Smith and Aleksandar Jokic, eds. Clarendon Press at 46.

usually not criticize strong representationalism on grounds other than its inability (if it does have this inability) to account for pure consciousness experiences. Of course, strong representationalism may well fail on other grounds, but the issue here is whether pure consciousness experiences provide any special reason to reject strong representationalism (and, by extension, other forms of representationalism) and thus whether pure consciousness experiences require that representationalism be abandoned as a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

3.2 Why be a representationalist?

Before moving on to the discussion of whether strong representationalism can account for pure consciousness experiences, let us first consider some of the motivations for taking a representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness to begin with. Perhaps the strongest motivation for such a view is its intuitive appeal: We (or at least most of us) take our phenomenally conscious experiences to be experiences of the world around us. For example, when I see a flower, this is because there is actually a flower before me and when I hear a bird chirping, this is because there is actually a bird chirping nearby (assuming of course, in both cases, that I am not currently hallucinating, dreaming, etc.). Ordinarily at least, our experiences are not just random or caused only by our own minds; rather, our experiences are caused by things in our environment. Further, things in our environment do not randomly cause our experiences or cause us to have

experiences of other things; rather, things in our environment cause us to have experiences of those very things. If there is something round in our environment, then that round thing will cause us to have an experience of something round; if there is something with a bumpy texture in our environment, then it will cause us to have an experience of something with a bumpy texture; etc. In this way, our experience presents us with information about our environment and, in doing so, our experience represents our environment.

Thus, at least in its weakest form (i.e., extra weak representationalism), a representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness is not very controversial. If one rejects the idea that our experiences are representational at all, then we are left with a very different ontological view than the general one most assume to be true. If one denies that our experience represents things external to the experience itself, then we lose the sort of connection to the external world that we generally take our experience (and ourselves) to have and we are no longer informed about the external world via our experience. If this is the case, then either our experiences still have a strong causal connection to the external world, but the external world causes random experiences rather than ones that represent the external world or our experiences are not caused by the external world at all (which leads to skepticism at best about the existence of an external world). In either case we are left with a situation in which our experiences do not inform us about the external world at all and having an experience of, say, a stream flowing through a meadow is completely unrelated to the question of whether one is

actually in or near a meadow with a stream flowing through it. Because (nearly) everyone wants to say that if they are having an experience of a stream flowing through a meadow and have good reason to think they are not dreaming, hallucinating, etc., then this means there actually is a meadow with a stream flowing through it present in the external world, (nearly) everyone accepts a representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness at least to some extent.

One might now agree that there is good reason to take a representationalist view about at least some types of phenomenally conscious experience, but not all types. Perhaps my visual experience of a bird represents, say, the light reflectance properties of its feathers and my auditory experience of a bird chirping represents, say, air passing across its syrinx, but this does not mean that there is anything that, for example, my experience of pain or of being tired represents. While many representationalists simply suggest that all phenomenally conscious experience is representational without going into much detail about the more controversial cases, Tye has gone to great lengths to demonstrate how even these more controversial cases are actually representational. Tye's reasoning will be presented in some detail in the next chapter and thus here I will only briefly explain why one might take these more controversial cases to be representational.

Pain is perhaps the most commonly discussed of the more controversial cases and while there is disagreement as to what exactly pain represents, there is good reason to think that it does represent. This is because pain is providing information about the condition of one's body and the location of this condition.

In other words, the experience of pain represents damage to one's body and, because pain is experienced as being located where the damage is, the experience of pain also represents the location of the damage. Further, the way the pain feels represents the kind of damage in question (for example, burns, broken bones, and paper cuts all result in different pain experiences and a bone broken clean through results in greater pain than a bone with a small fracture).

Representationalist accounts can also be given in other controversial cases. For example, as, again, will be discussed in more detail in connection with Tye in the next chapter, a general feeling such as being tired actually represents a physiological condition or complex of physiological conditions such as the strain of keeping one's eyelids open and/or the weight of one's body sinking into a chair (perhaps in a way that is stronger or more noticeable than usual). Even hallucinations can be seen as representational, with the hallucinatory experience representing properties of the hallucinated object. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, in addition to veridical perception, Tye provides explicit representationalist accounts of bodily sensations, emotions, moods, illusions, and hallucinations, arguing that all phenomenally conscious experience, including the more controversial cases, is representational. Before turning to these accounts, however, let us consider some more motivations for representationalism.

David Chalmers suggests that the idea that "phenomenal differences between visual experiences always correspond to representational differences has some prima facie plausibility, and serves as a sort of null hypothesis that should

be rejected only if there is strong evidence against it."[240],[241] This "null hypothesis" can easily be thought to apply to other types of sensory input as well. If there is a difference between two experiences in what I, for example, auditorily perceive, this means that my two experiences represent the world to be different. For example, an experience of a loud bang might represent a heavy object being dropped nearby whereas an experience of a faint bang might represent a heavy object being dropped farther away. In other words, differences in my experience represent differences in my environment. Further, if two experiences are the same, then they represent my environment to be the same (and thus a lack of phenomenal difference means a lack of representational difference). Anyone who accepts this null hypothesis for all types of phenomenal experience, accepts, at a minimum, weak representationalism.

The transparency argument, put forth by numerous representationalists, but perhaps first by Gilbert Harman,[242] provides additional reason to accept representationalism. Generally speaking, the argument is as follows: Take any phenomenal experience, say, the visual experience of an apple. When having this experience, one experiences the color of the apple, its shape, etc. Further, these properties (color, shape, etc.) are experienced as properties of the apple and not as properties of one's experience. That is, one takes the apple to be, say, somewhat spherical in shape; one does not take their experience to be somewhat spherical in

240Chalmers, "The Representational Character of Experience" at 161.

241Chalmers himself uses this claim to support a strong representationalist position, but the claim in and of itself only supports weak representationalism because it does not require an identity thesis.

242Harman, Gilbert (1990) "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience." *Philosophical Perspectives* 4:31-52 at 38-39.

shape. Further still, if one tries to shift the focus of their attention from the properties of the apple to the properties of their experience as distinct from the properties of the apple, one is unable to do so. This is because the properties of one's experience of the apple are not distinct from the properties of the apple itself. In other words, there are no experiential properties distinct from or over and above the properties of the object(s) of experience. All one's experience consists of is the properties of the object(s) of experience. Thus the transparency argument not only provides additional reason to accept representationalism, it provides reason to accept strong representationalism.

If one accepts that one's experience consists of nothing more than or over and above the properties of the object(s) of experience, then there is arguably even more reason to accept strong representationalism. Let us return to the apple example. Apples are physical objects with physical properties that are explainable in physical terms. Thus, if one's experience consists of nothing more than the properties of the apple, then one's experience also consists of physical properties explainable in physical terms. If one's experience is physical in this way, then the mysterious nature of phenomenal consciousness disappears. Rather than being some sort of unknown or unexplainable entity, phenomenal consciousness is just as familiar and explainable as the rest of the physical world. This ability to get rid of the mysterious nature of phenomenal consciousness makes strong representationalism even more appealing.

There is another way as well in which this appeal to the removal of

mystery supports strong representationalism. Objects or entities that are (presumably) not phenomenally consciousness can be said to represent. For example, the mercury in a thermometer represents properties of the air around it. In such cases, representationalism is purely physical and explainable in physical terms. One might put this in slightly different terms and say that the mercury level in the thermometer is intentional because it is about (at least in a certain sense) the air around it. Similarly, an artificial intelligence system, for example, can also be said to have intentionality. If, for example, the system is able to answer questions about geography and responds "Ottawa" when asked what the capital of Canada is, one could say that the system's response is intentional because it is about the relationship between Ottawa and Canada. Again, this intentionality is entirely physical.

Now consider a phenomenally conscious human that is also able to answer questions about geography and also responds "Ottawa" when asked what the capital of Canada is. Arguably the human's response is intentionally the same as the artificial intelligence system's response and thus if the artificial intelligence system's response is entirely physical, then so is the human's. Even though the human may be phenomenally conscious, phenomenal consciousness is not part of the intentionality in question. Thus at least some aspect of the mental life of a phenomenally conscious being is explainable in entirely physical terms. Strong representationalists see phenomenally conscious experience as also intentional and thus also explainable in entirely physical terms. For example, one's visual

experience of an apple is about the apple - about its color, shape, location, size, etc. Given that intentionality is explainable in entirely physical terms, if one's phenomenal experience is entirely intentional, then one's phenomenal experience is explainable in entirely physical terms. Again strong representationalism's appeal is enhanced by its ability to remove the mystery of phenomenal consciousness.

To sum up, unless we think our phenomenal experience provides no information at all about the external world, we have reason to at least be extra weak representationalists. If we go a step further and agree with Chalmers that differences in our phenomenal experience correspond to differences in our environment, then we have reason to be weak representationalists. The transparency argument strongly suggests that not only does our phenomenal experience correspond to our environment, our phenomenal experience is actually not distinct from the represented properties of the objects in our environment. Thus the transparency argument gives good reason to accept strong representationalism. Finally, the appeal of strong representationalism is enhanced by its ability to remove the mystery of phenomenal consciousness and explain phenomenal consciousness in entirely physical terms. These are not the only arguments that can be made in favor of (strong) representationalism, but they are the most commonly convincing ones and provide strong motivation for (strong) representationalism.

3.3 Arguments against strong representationalism

While various arguments can be made against extra strong, strong, weak, and extra weak representationalism, given that if pure consciousness experiences are representational at all, they must be a case of strong representationalism, I will focus here on some of the more common arguments that apply to strong representationalism. Other reasons for this focus are the significant lack of arguments against extra weak representationalism, the significant lack of support for extra strong representationalism, and the covering of, even if not explicitly so, arguments against weak representationalism via topics such as the more controversial cases discussed in the previous section and the strong representationalist responses to the objections below.

Arguments against strong representationalism tend to fall under one of two categories, the first category being cases in which there are alleged differences in phenomenal experience without any difference in representational content and the second category being cases in which there are alleged differences in representational content without any difference in phenomenal experience. With regard to the first category, one such argument is that different sensory modalities can represent the same information and thus there can be an experiential difference without a representational difference. For example, I might see a dog nearby that is dripping with water and thus my experience represents "wet dog nearby," but I might also have an olfactory sensation that also represents "wet dog nearby." Thus, the same information is being represented, but the phenomenal

experience is quite different.

The strong representationalist can respond to this type of example by arguing that the representational content is not actually the same in both cases (here, the visual and olfactory cases). In the present example, the anti-representationalist is wrong to claim that the representational content in both cases is "wet dog nearby." Rather, in the visual case, what is actually represented is (roughly speaking at least) the light reflectance properties of the dog's coat and the water and their relative spatial locations and, in the olfactory case, what is actually represented is (again, roughly speaking) the release of a certain chemical or chemical combination. Thus, contrary to the anti-representationalist's claim, when examined more closely such cases do not actually involve a difference in phenomenal experience and the same representational content.

Another type of case falling under the same category is that of bistable percepts. Bistable percepts involve a change in phenomenal experience via the same sensory modality despite no change in the object perceived. The well-known duck-rabbit drawing is an example of a bistable percept, in this case one that involves a change in phenomenally conscious visual experience despite no change in the object perceived. Because the object perceived does not change, one can argue that there is no change in representational content and thus there is a difference in phenomenal experience despite no difference in representational content.

Again the strong representationalist will respond by saying that there is

actually a difference in representational content. Tye, for example, argues that there are, in a sense, different levels to phenomenal experience and thus while the duck-rabbit drawing is the same at one level it is different at another level. The level at which the duck-rabbit picture differs (and thus results in different phenomenal experiences) is the level at which the visual input is grouped together. For example, when seeing the duck-rabbit drawing as a duck, a certain section of the visual input is grouped together as a bill and, when seeing the drawing as a rabbit, a certain section of the visual input is grouped together as an ear. In this way there actually is a representational difference, that difference involving the way components of the drawing relate to each other. When seeing the drawing as a duck, the components relate to each other in a "bill-shaped" way and when seeing the drawing as a rabbit, the components relate to each other in an "ear-shaped" way. This way in which the components relate to each other is part of how the object is represented in experience and thus bistable percepts actually do involve a representational difference and are not a case in which there is a phenomenal difference without a representational difference.[243]

Another example from this first category is Christopher Peacocke's tree example:

> Suppose you are standing on a road which stretches from you in a straight line to the horizon. There are two trees at the

243Tye, Michael (1995) *Ten Problems of Consciousness*. MIT Press at 140-141; Lycan, William G. (2008) "Representational Theories of Consciousness." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, (ed.), URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/consciousness-representational> at Section 4.4.2.

> roadside, one a hundred yards from you, the other two hundred. Your experience represents these objects as being of the same physical height and other dimensions; that is, taking your experience at face value you would judge that the trees are roughly the same physical size ... . Yet there is also some sense in which the nearer tree occupies more of your visual field than the more distant tree.

Thus we have another case in which, allegedly at least, the representational content is the same (the two trees are represented as being the same height, etc.) yet the phenomenal experience is different because the two trees take up different sized portions of the visual field.

Representationalists have responded to this example in various, yet often similar, ways. Tye, for example, points out that the representational content is not actually the same because one's "visual experience represents the nearer tree as being larger from here (the viewing position), that is, it represents it as subtending a larger visual angle."[244] Alex Byrne makes a similar point, simply noting that the two trees represent as being different distances from the subject.[245] Thus, again, we do not really have a case in which the phenomenal experience is the same, but the representational content is different because the representational content is also actually different.

A final example falling under this first category involves a type of

244Tye, Michael (1992) "Visual qualia and visual content" in *The Content of Experience: Essays on Perception*, Tim Crane, ed. Cambridge University Press, 158-176 at 173.

245Byrne, Alex (2001) "Intentionalism Defended." *The Philosophical Review* 110(2):199-240 at 222.

inversion. In this type of inversion, (certain parts of) two people's phenomenal experiences are inverted with respect to each other. For example, two people's phenomenal experience might be inverted with regard to color such that when one person sees an object as blue, the other person sees that same object as orange. Now suppose that these two people each look at a ripe tomato and one person experiences the tomato as red and the other person experiences the tomato as green.[246] Further, each person's experience represents the tomato as being ripe. Thus, both people's experiences have the same representational content, i.e., "ripe tomato," but different phenomenal experiences.

The simple strong representationalist response to such an example is that both people's experiences do not actually have the same representational content. Both people's experiences include the representational content "ripe tomato" and thus there is some overlap in representational content, but this is not the full extent of the representational content of the experiences. The representational content of the experiences also includes "this color" and "this color" is not the same for each person. Therefore, inversion cases such as this one, when examined more closely, are not actually cases in which phenomenal experience is the same yet representational content differs.

The second category of cases that can be used to argue against strong representationalism, to recall, involve alleged differences in representational content without any difference in phenomenal experience. Such cases are much

246If these two people live in the same community, then they will likely both refer to the tomato as "red" (or as "green"; the point here is that they will both use the same color word); however, the tomato will appear differently to each person.

harder to come by, but a variation of the previous example serves as one such case. Suppose the two people from the previous example look at two different tomatoes such that both have the same phenomenal experience. Given that these two people's color experiences are inverted relative to each other, if the two people are having identical phenomenal experiences of a tomato, one person's phenomenal experience represents "ripe tomato" while the other person's phenomenal experience represents "unripe tomato."

One way for a strong representationalist to respond to such an example is to argue that the two phenomenal experiences are not actually the same. One could argue that "ripe" or "unripe" is part of the phenomenal experience itself. Perhaps, for example, one has a slightly different phenomenally conscious emotional response when viewing a ripe as opposed to an unripe tomato (for example, perhaps when viewing a ripe tomato one has a very minor tinge of excitement that does not occur when viewing an unripe tomato).

A strong representationalist could also respond to such an example by arguing that "ripe" and "unripe" are not actually part of the representational content of phenomenal experience. Rather, "ripe" and "unripe" are components of a belief that accompanies, but is not part of, the phenomenal experience. Thus, again, the example is not actually one is which phenomenal experience is the same yet representational content differs. To the extent that the accompanying belief about the ripeness of the tomato is part of the phenomenal experience, then we are in a situation in which the phenomenal experience is not actually the same

and thus again we do not have an example in which phenomenal experience is the same yet representational content differs.

Clearly a pattern has emerged. Regardless of whether the opponent of strong representationalism argues that there are cases in which representational content is the same yet phenomenal experience differs and/or that there are cases in which phenomenal experience is the same yet representational content differs, the strong representationalist seems always able to point out that something has been overlooked. When more closely examined, we continuously find that either both representational content and phenomenal experience are actually the same or that they both actually differ. Of course the opponent of strong representationalism might not find all of these responses as convincing as the strong representationalist tends to, but at the very least the strong representationalist can maintain that their position has not been refuted.[247]

I now turn to the question of whether strong representationalists, and by extension other types of representationalists, can maintain their position in light of pure consciousness experiences.

247One might note that there are other types of inversion cases commonly found in literature on representationalism that I have not discussed here. This is because although inversion cases often get associated with representationalism, when examined closely, inversion cases tend not to actually address representationalism. Fred Dretske makes a similar point, saying, "[t]he 'problem' [of the inverted spectrum] is a problem for ... behaviorists and functionalists" and that representationalism "avoids this problem." Dretske, Fred (1995) *Naturalizing the Mind*. MIT Press at 72.

Chapter 4

Providing a Representationalist Account of Pure Consciousness Experiences

In presenting and defending a strong representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness, Michael Tye provides a very detailed, and what may be by far the most thorough, account of representationalism. For this reason I provide a detailed discussion of Tye's strong representationalist theory of phenomenal consciousness and an examination of whether Tye's strong representationalist theory can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. I examine other representationalist theories only to the extent that Tye's strong representationalist theory falls short or other theories offer a way to account for pure consciousness experiences that Tye's strong representationalist theory does not. In this chapter I consider whether and, if so, how pure consciousness experiences represent. In the next chapter I look at ways of delineating which representations are phenomenally conscious, again focusing on Tye's theory, and whether such delineations hold up in light of pure consciousness experiences.

On Tye's strong representationalist view of phenomenal consciousness, the phenomenal character of one's experience is nothing more than a certain type of representational content.[248] The phenomenal character of one's experience is nothing more than its representational content in the sense that all there is to one's

248This certain type of representational content is defined by Tye's PANIC approach, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

experience is its representational content; there are no phenomenal aspects of experience over and above, or in addition to, the representational content. Suppose, for example, that you are looking at a green cube before you. When you look at this object, you experience its qualities, such as its color and shape, as being qualities of the object and not of your experience. As Tye says, "[*n*]*one* of the qualities of which you are directly aware in seeing the [object] *look* to you to be qualities of your experience. You do not experience any of these qualities *as* qualities of your experience."[249] (emphasis supplied) As Tye also points out, if, when looking at the green cube, you attempt to change the focus of your attention from the external object to your experience of the object, nothing changes. "You are not aware of [the object] *and* a further inner object or episode."[250] (emphasis supplied) In shifting your attention in this way you do not become aware of an experienced green cube as distinct from the external green cube. What is more, in shifting your attention to your experience, you do not become aware of anything new or additional. In other words, in shifting your attention from the external object to your experience of the object, your experience still consists only of the representational features of the object and nothing more. There are no features of your experience above and beyond the features of the object itself. Thus your phenomenal experience consists of nothing more than the representational content of the object (or visual scene) before you.[251]

Tye argues that this strong representationist approach applies to all types of

249Tye, Michael (2002) "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience." *Noûs* 36(1):137-151 at 138.
250Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 139.
251One might recall this idea of transparency from Chapter 3.

phenomenal experience, not just cases of sensory perception of external objects. In cases of pain, for example, one is aware, even upon introspection, not of "qualities of the experiences ... but [of] qualities of bodily disturbances in regions where the pains are felt to be."[252] As in the case of external objects, the qualities presented are presented as qualities of a body part[253] and not as qualities of an experience.[254] The same goes for emotions. According to Tye, "the qualities of which one is directly aware in introspecting felt emotions are frequently localized in particular parts of the body and experienced as such."[255] For example, in the case of jealousy Tye says that "one is likely to feel one's stomach sink, one's heart beat faster, one's blood pressure increase."[256] Regardless of precisely what physiological changes occur, the point holds that the qualities one is aware of in cases of emotions are again qualities of body parts as opposed to qualities of the experience itself. Moods, as opposed to emotions, may not involve any particular body parts, but, according to Tye, a strong representationalist approach still works. Tye says that "one experiences a change in oneself *overall*. The qualities of which one is directly aware in attending to how one feels internally on such an occasion are experienced as qualities of *oneself*"[257] and not as "qualities of *one's experience*."[258] Tye elaborates on this point by noting that, in cases of elation,

252Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 143.
253The body part does not have to actually exist. For example, in the case of pain in a phantom limb the pain is still presented as a quality of a body part (even though the body part is nonexistent) and not as a quality of an experience.
254Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 143.
255Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 143.
256Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 143.
257Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.
258Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.

"[o]ne is aware of a general sense of buoyancy, of quickened reactions, of somehow being more alive,"[259] but it is not the case that "[o]ne's feeling of elation is ... buoyant or faster reacting or somehow more alive."[260] In all of these types of cases, as in the case of perceiving external objects, the qualities presented are qualities of the represented object(s), not qualities of the experience itself and there are no qualities above and beyond or in addition to those of the represented object(s).

This strong representationalist approach to phenomenal consciousness also applies, Tye argues, when the "the perceived object appears other than it is,"[261] as in cases of illusions, as well as when the represented object is not immediately present or is nonactual, such as in the case of hallucinations. Even in such cases, the qualities presented are qualities of the represented object and not qualities of the experience and, again, there are no qualities beyond those of the represented object. For example, if one hallucinates a tree, the qualities presented are those of the (nonactual) tree and there are no qualities other than those of the (nonactual) tree.[262]

259Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.
260Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.
261Tye, Michael (2009) "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59(236):541-562 at 541.
262Tye offers several suggestions as to what exactly is being represented in the case of hallucinations. See Tye, Michael (forthcoming) "What Is the Content of a Hallucinatory Experience?" in Berit Brogaard, ed., *Does Perception Have Content?* Oxford University Press. While even Tye himself does not seem fully convinced by any of these suggestions, he does maintain the position that strong representationalism can successfully handle cases of hallucination.

4.1 Veridical perception

Let us now consider how Tye's strong representationalist approach might account for pure consciousness experiences. Let us first consider whether pure consciousness experiences can be accounted for as straightforwardly as veridical perception, such as in the case of seeing a green cube that is before you. For pure consciousness to be accounted for in this way, it must involve sensing an external object or objects and the experience must consist of nothing more than represented qualities of the object or objects. Given that pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation or diversity of features and given that other than some sort of "buzz" there is no content to such experiences, one suggestion would be that nothingness or a void (or something similar) is being represented. In taking such an approach, one must accept the existence of something such as nothingness or a void, but, unlike, for example, traditional views of ayin, one can still maintain the idea of an object (as distinct from the subject) being represented in phenomenally conscious experience.

This approach, in which what is represented in pure consciousness experiences is a representational quality of nothingness or a void, while adhering to Tye's strong representationalist view that the content of experience is nothing more than represented qualities, raises some problems. For one, it is unclear as to why nothingness or a void would have the representational quality of a buzz as opposed to anything else or as opposed to not having any representational quality at all. After all, nothingness or a void seem to be characterized by their *lack* of

anything whereas pure consciousness experiences, due to the buzz, are characterized by *something*. Further, nothingness or a void tend to be thought of in comparative terms, that is, as compared to the presence of something, but pure consciousness experiences do not have multiple parts and thus lack any sort of comparative aspect.

One could argue, however, that even though pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of comparative aspect, they can still be compared to other experiences once the pure consciousness experience has ended and thus pure consciousness experiences do have a comparative lack of content. This comparative lack of content, though, does still involve some content (the buzz) and, again, it is unclear why nothingness or a void would have such a representational quality, especially given that the buzz involves the presence of something whereas nothingness or a void are characterized by their lack of anything.

Another problem with such an approach is that, following the approach of veridical perception as we are currently doing, nothingness or a void must be a perceived external entity. The closest thing to nothingness or a void that we encounter (outside of physics labs or perhaps something such as a black hole) is the so-called "empty space" that is actually filled with air that exists in our environment where other objects do not. Could it be air that is being represented in pure consciousness experiences? If so, via which sense is it being represented?

When we experience air via our sense of touch, we experience it as a warm

or cool sensation against our skin. Given that pure consciousness experiences do not involve warm or cool sensations nor an awareness of the surface of our body, it does not seem that experiencing air via the sense of touch could result in pure consciousness experiences. When we experience air via our ability to hear, we experience it as, for example, a whooshing sound, such as when it is windy, but pure consciousness experiences do not involve any such sound, so hearing seems to also be ruled out. We do not seem to experience air via our sense of taste and any awareness of air via the mouth seems to occur via our sense of touch (again, a warm or cool sensation), so it does not seem to be our sense of taste that results in pure consciousness experiences.

Based on the traditional sense categories, this leaves sight and smell. When it comes to sight, we seem to not actually see air, but rather to see straight through it, unnoticed, to objects that lie beyond it. Even if we look, say, straight up into the sky on a clear day such that there are no objects within the distance that we can see, while we may visually experience air, at least in a certain sense, we do not experience it as a buzz, but rather as a color, usually a shade of blue.

One might argue that it could still be visual experiences of air that result in the buzz of pure consciousness as well as the buzz that arguably accompanies everyday conscious experiences. Maybe our conscious experiences include a buzz because whenever we look at things there is air present and the buzz is the representational feature of air.[263]

Such a position is problematic for numerous reasons. For one, if I close

263Similar arguments and responses could be given regarding air and touch, hearing, and taste.

my eyes, there does not seem to be any change in my conscious experience equivalent to the disappearance of a "buzz." One could argue, though, that even if my eyes are closed I am still remembering or hallucinating air and this is what results in this lack of change/continued presence of the buzz. However, it seems unlikely that people born without the sense of sight and who never experience the sense of sight have a different overall conscious experience such that they do not experience any sort of buzz while people born with a sense of sight do. Therefore, it can not be visual experiences of air that result in the buzz of consciousness and it thus can not be the sense of sight that results in pure consciousness experiences.

Let us now turn to the sense of smell. Sometimes we notice air against our nostrils when we breathe, but this would again fall under sense of touch given that it is the coolness or warmness of the air against our body that we are experiencing. We think of the sense of smell as involving, for example, a particularly good or bad smell such as in cases when flowers or rotting garbage (or particles affected by these things) are being represented in experience. One could argue, though, that the buzz of pure consciousness experiences can be explained in that there is ordinarily a buzz of consciousness that is actually air being represented olfactorily (including in the absence of any (other) notable odor).

Interestingly, empirical evidence suggests that the thalamus plays a key role in conscious experience, acting as a gatekeeper with regard to what information gets passed on to the cortex, where consciousness is supposedly

located, and it is thought that "[a]ll information except smell"[264] travels through the thalamus on the way to the cortex.[265] Thus, if the buzz of consciousness is actually the olfactory representation of air, then pure consciousness could be explained by the thalamus closing its gates, so to speak, thereby blocking all information from getting to the cortex except that based on smell. Therefore, one would experience the buzz and nothing else. The problem with this suggestion, however, is that, similar to the case of vision, people born without a sense of smell still presumably have the same sorts of conscious experiences as others when it comes to the other senses and it is not the case that people born with a sense of smell experience a buzz of consciousness while people born without a sense of smell do not. It is also unlikely that if someone with an intact sense of smell were born and lived some place with no air,[266] their conscious experiences would differ from what they would have been had they been born on earth, with the difference being the lack of, as opposed to the presence of, a buzz of consciousness. Thus it seems that the buzz present in pure consciousness, and also arguably present in everyday consciousness, can not be the olfactory representation of air and it therefore can not be the sense of smell that results in pure consciousness experiences.

So if, again, following the approach of veridical perception, nothingness or a void must be a perceived external entity, but it is not the so-called empty space that is all around us, what else could it be? One might be inclined to take a more

264Austin, *Zen-Brain Reflections* at 167.
265Austin, *Zen-Brain Reflections* at 167.
266I ignore here the issue of how one would survive in such a world. Perhaps oxygen could be provided in some sort of intravenous-like way or in some other creative way.

mystical approach and suggest that there is some sort of nothingness or void that exists that we only tap into or become aware of during pure consciousness experiences. Given that Tye wants to be able to account for consciousness in physicalist terms, explaining how this nothingness or void that one taps into or becomes aware of is part of the physical world, as opposed to some alternate metaphysical realm, and how one taps into or becomes aware of it (via a traditional sense mechanism or in some other way) is no easy task and it is unclear how one would even begin to go about achieving it. Not only that, but even if such task were achievable, it still leaves the question as to why nothingness or a void would be represented as a buzz rather than as a lack of anything. It seems unlikely that pure consciousness experiences can be explained as veridical experiences under a strong representationalist approach that is consistent with physicalism and, if they can be, based on current understanding of the physical, it is very difficult, or even impossible, to say what such an explanation would look like.

4.2 Bodily sensations

Having found Tye's strong representationalist approach to veridical experiences to be unsatisfactory in accounting for pure consciousness experiences, let us now turn to Tye's strong representationalist account of bodily sensations, such as pain. Again, in cases of bodily sensations, the qualities represented in conscious experience are the qualities of body parts. So, for example, if you

experience a pain in your finger, "your attention goes to wherever you feel the pain ... . In attending to your pain, you are directly and immediately aware of a certain quality or cluster of qualities, which you experience as being in your finger."[267] (emphasis removed) Similarly for other bodily sensations.

If pure consciousness experiences are to be accounted for via a strong representationalist approach to bodily sensations, then pure consciousness experiences must direct one's attention to the body part being represented. However, during pure consciousness experiences, one's attention is not directed to any body part. During pure consciousness experiences one is aware only of the buzz and not of the buzz as being located anywhere. So it seems that pure consciousness experiences can not be accounted for in terms of bodily sensations, but let us not be quite so quick to dismiss this approach.

According to Patricia A. McGrath, studies on behavioral responses to painful stimuli in infants and young children have shown that "[i]nfants' reactions to a noxious stimulus change as they develop, from a general body distress response to a more specific response localized to the site of stimulation."[268] One interpretation of this change in response is simply that while attention is directed to a specific bodily location in the cases of infants, they do nothing to outwardly indicate or communicate this direction of attention (such as, for example, touching the relevant body part). However, it seems that even adults can, at least on occasion, have trouble locating the body part being represented in cases of bodily

267Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 142.
268McGrath, Patricia A. (1990) *Pain in Children: Nature, Assessment, and Treatment*. The Guilford Press at 23.

sensations. For example, an itch can occasionally be difficult to locate when attempting to scratch it or it may be difficult to tell exactly where in your head your headache is located (which may be important if you are trying to use a topical headache remedy). Perhaps then, at least in some instances, this inability to locate the specific bodily location of a bodily sensation is due to lack of experience. In other words, perhaps there is learning involved and the ability to attend to and direct action toward the relevant body part is, in at least some cases, learned through practice (or in the case of infants, perhaps through help from a parent or other caregiver).

If it is the case that at least some instances of attending to or locating body parts represented in bodily sensations involve learning, and given that pure consciousness experiences are typically rare, one could argue that pure consciousness experiences are actually bodily sensations that represent a specific body part, it is just that due to insufficient practice with this sort of experience, one has not learned to attend to that body part or associate the experience with that body part. There are problems with such an argument, however.

For one, the idea that one must learn what body part is being represented in at least some cases of bodily sensations is questionable. When it comes to infants, it could be that they have not yet learned what body part is being represented in, for example, experiences of pain, but it is also possible that they simply do not outwardly indicate their awareness of the relevant body part for other reasons (such as, for example, not yet realizing that rubbing might help or

that indicating the location to a caregiver could lead to faster relief). When it comes to adults and difficult to locate itches or headaches, again it could be an issue of learning, but it could also be that the representational information is vague or even frequently changing. Given that adults seem to usually be quite skilled at locating represented body parts, the latter option seems likely.

Another problem with the argument that pure consciousness experiences represent a bodily location, but insufficient practice results in the experiencer not being able to attend to or locate that body part is that some experienced practitioners of meditation have undergone numerous pure consciousness experiences. If being able to attend to the relevant body part is a matter of practice, it would seem that such experienced practitioners would be able to attend to or locate the relevant body part, but this is not the case. Further, if one could attend to a body part, then, as already pointed out, it would not really be a pure consciousness experience because, in attending to the body part, the experience involves something other than just the buzz, i.e., awareness of a body part or, at the very least, some awareness of space and spatial location.

So again it seems that pure consciousness experiences can not be accounted for in terms of representation of bodily sensations, but let us make one more attempt to fit such experiences into this category. Tye says that when experiencing a pain in a finger, for example, you attend to the location in which you feel the pain, that is, your finger, but Tye also notes that "[y]our attention does not go to where your experience is (that is, to your head, if your experience is a

physical thing) or to nowhere at all."[269] So what if the location of your experience and the location of the represented body part are one and the same? Suppose experience is located in part of your brain and it is this same part of your brain that is (at the same time) represented in your experience. Of course the idea that your brain produces bodily sensations is contrary to the common view that the brain does not produce such things, but given how little is currently known about the brain, especially when it comes to consciousness, it would be premature to dismiss this possibility outright.

While the various studies discussed in Chapter 2 are not without their problems, there is empirical evidence to suggest that pure consciousness experiences involve changes in one or more types of brain wave. Thus perhaps qualities of brain waves (or electrical activity in the brain) are represented in pure consciousness experiences and conscious experiences are also located in, or contained in, brain waves. Such an idea is consistent with mind-brain identity theorist views that suggest that the mind and the brain are one and the same, but are simply viewed from different perspectives, with qualia, such as the sensation of blue, being experienced from the first-person perspective whereas when cutting into someone's head and watching these same brain waves (if it were possible to do so) one is now experiencing these brain waves from the third-person perspective and thus not experiencing blue qualia. On such an approach, brain wave activity could represent itself in experience and could, from the first-person perspective, be experienced as a buzz. This is consistent with Tye's position that

269Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 142.

represented qualities and experience are one and the same. In this case the buzz of pure consciousness is the represented quality of brain waves and the experience consists of nothing more than this represented quality.

If brain waves and conscious experience are one and the same thing, let us call this thing x, then during pure consciousness experiences x represents itself to itself. In other words, if phenomenal consciousness is nothing more than certain brain wave activity and it is brain wave activity that is being represented in conscious experience, then, from the third-person perspective, brain wave activity is being represented in the same brain wave activity and, from the first-person perspective, phenomenal consciousness is being represented in same phenomenal consciousness.

Even if it is found that changes in brain wave activity are not related to pure consciousness experiences, as long as there is some physical location (in the brain, or even elsewhere) that is simultaneously both the location of conscious experience and the location of the represented body part, then the idea that x represents itself to itself still holds. Further, this account has the merit of explaining why there seems to be a "buzz" to conscious experience in general. Because all conscious experience involves the activation of some brain location, the qualities of this brain location are always represented in experience and thus there is always a buzz whenever there is conscious experience. One may be more or less aware of this buzz depending on what else one is experiencing and where one's attention is directed and the buzz may frequently or even always be

overshadowed by other contents of experience (except in cases of pure consciousness experiences), but there is nevertheless an explanation of why the buzz is there at all.

While this account serves to explain the buzz of conscious experience, it can also be made consistent with the position that there is no buzz in ordinary conscious experience and thus one can accept this account without being forced to take sides in the "buzz or no buzz" debate. With regard to the no buzz position, one could argue that while the buzz of pure consciousness experiences can be explained in this way, pure consciousness experiences involve different brain wave activity and/or different brain locations than other types of conscious experience and that during other types of conscious experience these brain waves or brain locations are not represented in experience (or, if they are represented, their representational quality is something other than a buzz).

Even if the buzz of pure consciousness experiences can be so explained, however, another issue remains, which is the question of why pure consciousness experiences consist of only a buzz and nothing else. The answer to this question is arguably an empirical one rather than a philosophical one. Given evidence of physiological changes during pure consciousness experiences and meditation in general, it seems that a physiological explanation as to why pure consciousness experiences consist of nothing more than a buzz is likely. As mentioned above, the thalamus seems to act as a gatekeeper for most sensory input, playing a key role in determining what information reaches conscious experience. Perhaps,

then, there are gatekeepers for any additional information that can potentially become part of conscious experience (such as that derived from sense of smell) and in cases of pure consciousness the thalamus and all additional gatekeepers close their gates, but phenomenal consciousness continues.[270] With the closing of these gates, the only thing represented in phenomenal consciousness is the part of the brain that simultaneously both is and is represented in phenomenally conscious experience.

In this way Tye's strong representationalist account of bodily sensations seems to be able to account for pure consciousness experiences. Under Tye's strong representationalist account of bodily sensations, phenomenally conscious experience consists of represented qualities of body parts and one thus attends to the represented body part. In the case of pure consciousness, the body part being represented and attended to is in the same location, or same space and time, as the experience itself. Because of this, attending to the body part, consistent with pure consciousness experiences, does not involve any awareness of space, spatial location, or differentiation. Because the represented body part and the experience are one and the same, attending to the represented body part means attending to consciousness itself.

While Tye's strong representationalist approach to bodily sensations seems quite successful in accounting for pure consciousness experiences, let us consider

270This idea is consistent with research on psychedelic drugs. The use of at least some psychedelic drugs can result in pure consciousness experiences (see Chapter 1) and at least some psychedelic drugs seem to produce their effects by impacting thalamo-cortical gating. See, e.g., Vollenweider, Franz X. and Mark A. Geyer (2001) "A systems model of altered consciousness: Integrating natural and drug-induced psychoses." *Brain Research Bulletin* 56(5):495-507.

whether Tye's strong representationalist approach to other types of phenomenal experiences might prove successful as well. Let us next turn to Tye's strong representationalist account of emotions.

4.3 Emotions

Emotions also involve the representation of body parts, but in a more complex way. One example Tye uses to explain this is that of anger: "Suppose you suddenly feel extremely angry. Your body will change in all sorts of ways: for example, your blood pressure will rise, your nostrils will flare, your face will flush, your chest will heave as the pattern of your breathing alters, ..."[271] According to Tye, "[t]hese physical changes are registered in the sensory receptors distributed throughout your body"[272] and "you will mechanically build up a complex sensory representation of how your body has changed."[273] Your feeling of anger, then, "consists in the complex sensory representation of these changes."[274] Not all feelings of anger are the same, of course. This is because "your body might change in somewhat different ways"[275] and "[t]he felt difference arises because of the different body state that is sensorily represented."[276]

There is some reason to think that Tye's strong representationalist approach to emotions is a plausible candidate for accounting for pure consciousness experiences. The experiments discussed in Chapter 2 suggest that

271Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.
272Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.
273Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.
274Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.
275Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.
276Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 126.

not only do changes in brain activity occur during pure consciousness experiences, but that changes in other parts of the body occur as well, such as changes in breathing and heart rate. Some Hindu and Buddhist texts suggest such changes as well. One could argue that pure consciousness experiences consist in the complex representation of changes in things such as brain activity, breathing, and heart rate. In support of his account of emotions, Tye asks us to "consider what it would be like to feel angry if you felt no changes at all of the sort [mentioned above] in connection with anger"[277] (emphasis removed) and says that he himself "can form no clear conception of what is being asked. Take away the sensations of all such changes, and there seems to me no feeling of anger left."[278] Similarly, one might argue that if one removes the physiological changes that occur during pure consciousness experiences, there would be no such experience left.

There seem to be some problems with such a position, however. One such problem is that, according to Tye, differences in physiological changes result in differences in felt emotion, but empirical evidence suggests that pure consciousness experiences occur despite differences in physiological changes. For example, Severeide provides information regarding respiratory changes during numerous pure consciousness experiences in a single subject. Although these changes follow a similar pattern, they are not all identical.[279] This means that differences in physiology are not represented in experience. If differences in

277Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 127.
278Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 127.
279See Severeide, "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation" Figure 3 at 1565.

physiology are not represented in experience, then pure consciousness experiences can not be accounted for in the way that emotions are accounted for. One could respond to this problem, however, by arguing that these differences in physiology are represented in pure consciousness experiences, it is just that these differences are so minute they are not recalled or noticed as differences by those who undergo the experiences. Just as one might not notice a subtle difference between, for example, two patches of green, especially if the patches are not simultaneously present in experience, one might also not notice a subtle difference in represented physiological qualities, especially when they are also not simultaneously present in experience, but rather each is present in a different instance of a pure consciousness experience. While such minute differences take away from the "pureness" of at least one of any two differing pure consciousness experiences, it is arguable that the possibility of such differences can only be denied based on a steadfast clinging to the idea of the "pureness" of pure consciousness experiences. There may, however, be other reasons to dispute the ability of the emotions-based approach to account for pure consciousness experiences.

Another problem with accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of a complex of physiological representations involves awareness of these physiological changes. Tye asks us to consider what it would be like to feel angry if we did not undergo any of the physiological changes typically associated with anger and argues that if we take away all of these physiological changes, there is no feeling of anger left. Such an exercise suggests that we are able to isolate and

attend to these changes. For example, when angry we can take note of our chest heaving and attend to this separately from attending to our blood pressure rising. This is not the case with pure consciousness experiences. During pure consciousness experiences there is no differentiation and one can not attend to any body part (except perhaps, as discussed in connection with bodily sensations, the part of the brain in which the pure consciousness experience is located). During pure consciousness experiences, one can not attend to, for example, one's heart rate nor can one distinguish the represented qualities of one's heart rate from, say, the represented qualities of one's breathing. Given this lack of ability to attend to these represented qualities of physiological occurrences, Tye's challenge of considering what it would be like to feel a given emotion if we did not undergo any of the typically associated physiological changes is quite easy when it comes to pure consciousness experiences. Given the complete lack of awareness of anything other than the buzz during pure consciousness experiences, one could quite easily imagine undergoing any of a large variety of physiological changes, or none at all, while still undergoing a pure consciousness experience.[280] However, despite the ease of overcoming Tye's challenge when it comes to pure consciousness experiences, it could still be the case that if these physiological changes were not undergone there would be no pure consciousness experience left.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the ability of Tye's strong

280Whether one thinks that one can actually imagine such things depends on one's view of what is imaginable in connection with what impact physiological changes, or lack thereof, have on pure consciousness experiences. Because it does not matter for present purposes I will not pursue this issue here.

representationalist approach to emotions to account for pure consciousness experiences is the following: Given that it is typically the case that physiological changes in such things as heart rate and breathing pattern are both individually attendable to and not represented as a buzz,[281] and given that such physiological changes are not always identical from one pure consciousness experience to the next, there does not seem to be any reason why pure consciousness experiences consist in only an undifferentiated, indistinguishable buzz while all other emotions consist in a complex that is both differentiated and distinguishable, differentiated in that one can attend to individual components of the complex and distinguishable in that one can distinguish between the feel of, for example, one experience of anger and another. One might respond to the distinguishable aspect of this argument similarly as above and argue that while some instances of, say, anger can be distinguished, more similar instances of anger can not be distinguished from one instance to the next and in this way anger is just like pure consciousness experiences, with the exception that pure consciousness experiences refer to a narrower range of physiological changes, hence the always smaller and indistinguishable difference in represented qualities when it comes to pure consciousness experiences. Such a response, though, still leaves us with the issue of differentiation.

Differentiation seems to be what distinguishes Tye's strong representationalist account of emotions from that of bodily sensations. In cases of bodily sensations, qualities of a single body part are represented in experience

281Or, at the very least, not only represented as a buzz.

whereas in cases of emotion, a complex of qualities of multiple body parts or physiological changes are represented in experience. However, in cases of emotion, it does not seem to be until you introspect that you are able to recognize the feeling as a complex of qualities or that you are able to recognize parts of this complex as representing (physiological changes occurring in) different parts of the body. Therefore, the lack of differentiation during pure consciousness experiences could be due to the lack of introspection during pure consciousness experiences.[282] Thus it could be that pure consciousness experiences are a complex of represented qualities of multiple body parts or physiological changes, it is just that one can not become aware of this sort of experience as such because introspection is not part of the experience. Just because such awareness is lacking, however, does not mean that such a complex is not occurring and it thus seems that pure consciousness experiences could be such a complex. Even if one were to argue that in cases of emotions such as anger, introspection is not required for awareness of distinct physiological changes, but rather that one has at least peripheral awareness of such changes without introspection, it could simply be that pure consciousness experiences are a special case and unique in their lacking any such (peripheral) awareness. Nothing seems to require that in order for emotions to be explained in terms of a complex of represented qualities, one must

282Introspection is not only something that does not occur during pure consciousness experiences, it is something that can not occur. Introspection, at the very least, involves thinking about one's experiences, which requires the use of concepts, even if only very rudimentary ones. The use of concepts involves differentiation even if the differentiation is something as simple as isolating an aspect of one's experience (although it is usually something more complex than this). Because introspection involves differentiation and pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation, pure consciousness experiences can not involve introspection.

be able to individually attend to components of the complex.

A final argument against the ability of Tye's strong representationalist approach to emotions to account for pure consciousness experiences shall lead us, in a round about way, to a reason why this approach ultimately seems unsuccessful. The final argument against the approach is simply the following: Pure consciousness is not an emotion. Emotions involve affective changes from some sort of baseline or neutral condition. Given that pure consciousness experiences consist only of a buzz and contain no affect at all, positive or negative, they are neutral. If emotions are a change from neutrality, then pure consciousness experiences can not be, or involve, emotions.

Tye recognizes that one can lack any emotion. Tye explains, saying "[a]s I write, I am not especially happy or unhappy; I am not angry or sad or fearful. Nothing out of the ordinary is happening, feeling-wise."[283] Tye says that despite this lack of emotion, there is still feeling going on. Tye says, "I am constantly feeling all sorts of things pertaining to my body, for example, where all my limbs are, and how they are connected to one another, even though I rarely attend to these feelings."[284] Tye says that these "background feelings," as he calls them, "fit into the general category of bodily sensations, although they are not confined in their contents to single, discrete bodily regions like pains."[285] According to Tye, background feelings "are constantly present in normal persons, anchoring them in their bodies."[286]

283Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 123.
284Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 123.
285Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 124.
286Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 124.

One could argue that Tye is wrong to claim that we are "continuously subject to background feelings that represent [our] overall background body state."[287] One could argue that we are only phenomenally aware of, for example, where our limbs are or the pressure of a pillow under our head[288] when we direct our attention to these things and that without directing our attention in such a way we are not phenomenally conscious of such things. Without directing our attention to such things, the argument continues, our background feelings are not only neutral, but undifferentiated. While our background feelings may represent our overall background body state as Tye claims, such representation results in a complex, as in the case of emotions, and we are only aware of the components of this complex when we specifically attend to them. Unlike emotions, however, the resulting complex is neutral in affect. Thus, like pure consciousness experiences, experiences of background bodily sensations are neutral and undifferentiated.[289]

Suppose it is the case that experiences of background bodily sensations are neutral and undifferentiated. What is represented in this representational complex? It can not be the case that nothing is represented, for if nothing were represented there would be no phenomenal experience at all rather than a phenomenal experience that is neutral and undifferentiated. If one experiences emotions due to changes in specific background bodily sensations, as Tye suggests, then perhaps the background bodily sensations represented are all of the

287Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 125.

288Example taken from Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 124.

289I ignore here the fact that background bodily sensations are usually, if not always, accompanied by additional types of conscious experience, such as that resulting from vision. Hence even if background bodily sensations are neutral and undifferentiated, one's overall conscious experience is not.

ones that can be represented during the occurrence of emotions. Given the wide variety of emotions that exist and the wide variety of physiological occurrences they represent, this would result in many background bodily sensations being represented in the neutral representational complex. Regardless of exactly what is being represented, we reach the same problem. Pure consciousness experiences are neutral and undifferentiated, yet, with regard to at least some aspects of physiology, what is occurring in the body during pure consciousness experiences is significantly different than what is occurring in the body at other emotionally neutral times. For example, one's breathing pattern is quite different during pure consciousness experiences than it is when one is undergoing a typical emotionless experience. If one wants to maintain that significantly different breathing patterns both result in neutral conscious experience, then one must explain why in cases of emotions that also involve significantly different breathing patterns, the resulting experience is not neutral.

In attempting to provide such an explanation, one might argue that the physiological changes that result in experiences of emotions do not include any of the physiological changes that result in pure consciousness experiences. To oversimplify things for the purpose of providing an example, suppose that pure consciousness experiences are a complex of represented qualities of brain waves, heart beat, and breathing patterns and suppose that experiences of anger are a complex of represented qualities of breathing patterns, blood pressure changes, and muscle tensing. It could be then that in cases of anger, changes in breathing

patterns continue to represent neutrally and it is the change in blood pressure and muscle tensing that result in the phenomenal feel of anger. In other words, it is only the physiological changes that are not involved in pure consciousness experiences that result in non-neutral feels.

Such an explanation fails. The studies presented in Chapter 2 strongly suggest that, among other things, changes in breathing pattern accompany pure consciousness experiences, so let us take that as our example in combatting the position that even significant changes of breathing pattern can still represent neutrally in experience. Try significantly altering your breathing pattern by breathing much more slowly than you ordinarily do. If you breathe slowly, it should not be too long until you begin to feel a bit differently, perhaps a bit dizzy and lightheaded. Hence changes in breathing pattern do not represent neutrally at all. You might contend, though, that it is not necessarily the change in breathing pattern that results in this feeling of lightheadedness, but rather this result could be caused by your directing your attention to your breathing, something you do not ordinarily do and thus do not ordinarily feel lightheaded. Wait for the lightheaded feeling to subside and then direct your attention to your breathing. Now we again have a situation in which your attention is directed toward your breathing, but this time the result is not a feeling of lightheadedness. This strongly suggests that when breathing slowly, the resulting feeling of lightheadedness was not a result of your change in attention, but rather a result of your change in breathing pattern (or, more precisely, change in oxygen intake and its physiological effects). Hence

it is not the case that only physiological changes of a type that do not accompany pure consciousness experiences result in non-neutral feels. It also follows that significantly different breathing patterns do not all result in neutral conscious experience. This means that background bodily sensations and pure consciousness experiences can not both result in a neutral experience despite significant differences in the physiological conditions being represented.

We have finally been brought, in the round about way, to the reason Tye's strong representationalist approach to emotions does not seem to be able to successfully account for pure consciousness experiences. In the case of emotions, aspects of one's physiology and the phenomenal feel of one's experience are markedly different than the physiology and phenomenal feel that exist when only background bodily sensations are represented in consciousness. In cases of pure consciousness experiences, despite marked differences in things such as brain activity, heart rate, and breathing, like cases consisting only of background bodily sensations, the phenomenal feel is neutral. This similarity in phenomenal feel despite significant physiological differences means that it can not be that both cases of pure consciousness experiences and cases consisting only of background bodily sensations are a complex representation of the same, or some of the same, body parts or physiological occurrences. Given that in cases consisting only of background bodily sensations things such as breathing and heart rate either represent as neutral or are not represented at all and given that changes in such things when it comes to emotions represent as some sort of non-neutral feel, if

such changes are represented in pure consciousness experiences, they must also be represented as some sort of non-neutral feel. The above example of intentionally altering one's breathing pattern supports this conclusion. Given that pure consciousness experiences do not involve any sort of non-neutral feel, it can not be the case that pure consciousness experiences consist in a complex representation of such physiological changes. Therefore, Tye's strong representationalist approach to emotions can not account for pure consciousness experiences.

4.4 Moods

Let us next turn to Tye's strong representationalist approach to moods. To recall, while emotions represent changes in particular body parts, moods involve experiencing "a change in oneself *overall*"[290] (emphasis supplied) and the qualities one is aware of "are experienced as qualities of *oneself*."[291],[292] (emphasis supplied) Moods might also impact "how the external world itself appears."[293] If feeling elated, for example, "[t]he sky may appear brighter; the chirping of nearby birds

290Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.

291Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.

292In *Ten Problems of Consciousness* Tye gives a somewhat different description of moods in which he says that "[w]e experience moods *as* descending on us, *as* being located where we are, *as* taking us over." (emphasis supplied) (Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 128.) In this way Tye speaks of moods as if they are entities in and of themselves rather than consisting of qualities of oneself. I focus on Tye's account of moods as given in his "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" since it is a more recent work. I should note, however, that Tye's account of moods in his *Ten Problems of Consciousness* can not account for pure consciousness experiences either given that the account describes things such as spatial location and an awareness of a mood as distinct from oneself. Neither spatial location nor an awareness of distinct entities are compatible with pure consciousness experiences because they involve differentiation within the experience whereas pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation.

293Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.

louder ... ."[294]

Given that pure consciousness experiences involve nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz, if pure consciousness experiences are interpreted as moods, the only impact they could have on the appearance of the external world is either to have it appear as an undifferentiated buzz or to have it not appear in experience at all. In cases of elation, as Tye describes, as well as in cases of other moods, the impact on how the external world appears is not so great that it becomes unrecognizable. The qualities of the external world represented in experience do not fundamentally change, but rather are enhanced or emphasized in certain ways, depending on the mood. For example, a red jacket may look particularly bright and beautiful if one is elated whereas the same red jacket may look particularly dull and dingy if one is depressed, but nevertheless the object continues to represent as red and jacket-shaped. If pure consciousness experiences are interpreted as a mood, the change in how external objects represent would not only be much more extreme than in the cases of other moods, but would be a change of a fundamentally different kind in that, unlike in the cases of other moods, none[295] of the external objects' usually represented qualities would be present in experience.

Suppose one were willing to accept that pure consciousness experiences could involve such an extreme impact on the represented qualities of external objects. This would mean that the buzz of pure consciousness experiences would

294Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.
295With the possible exception of a buzz, which will be discussed shortly.

be a represented quality of one or more external objects. Given that the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is undifferentiated, either all perceived external objects would have to have the same represented quality or their represented qualities would have to unite in some way such that the experience does not involve any differentiation between the different qualities represented. What is more, any of the diversity of external objects (or combination of external objects) perceived during pure consciousness experiences - from swirling disco lights to a pounding jackhammer to a fluffy pillow - must have qualities that represent as either the same or as similar enough such that any difference is insufficient to be noticed as a difference when comparing distinct instances of pure consciousness experiences. Further, to accept such a position, one must also accept that the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a quality of external objects: just as, for example, the chair before you is blue, it is also buzzing.

Even if one were willing to accept such an unusual position, there is another problem that prevents Tye's strong representationalist approach to moods from accounting for pure consciousness experiences. Again, Tye says that moods involve an experience of a change in oneself overall and that the qualities one is aware of are "experienced as qualities of oneself."[296] (emphasis removed) This is a problem in that moods thus include an awareness of oneself and to be aware of oneself, one must at the very least be aware of oneself as an entity distinct from anything else. Given that pure consciousness experiences consist of nothing more than a buzz and that during pure consciousness experiences there is no awareness

296Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 144.

of oneself nor any awareness of any entity as distinct from anything else, pure consciousness experiences can not be accounted for under Tye's strong representationalist approach to moods.

One might argue, however, that it is only upon introspection that one is aware of oneself in the case of moods. After all, Tye does say that one is aware of the represented qualities as qualities of oneself *when one attends to how one feels internally* and this could be taken to imply introspection. Thus, when not introspecting, moods could be, just like emotions, a complex sensory representation of various changes. If this is the case, then the argument made above with regard to emotions also applies to moods: If the lack of any particular mood (which would still involve the presence of background bodily sensations) represents as either neutral or nothing at all and moods involve significant physiological changes from this background state, then, given that in the case of moods these changes represent as some sort of non-neutral feel, then, if pure consciousness experiences are to be accounted for in the same way as moods and pure consciousness experiences also involve significant physiological changes from the background state, the physiological changes that accompany pure consciousness experiences must also be represented in experience as some sort of non-neutral feel. Given that pure consciousness experiences do not involve any sort of non-neutral feel, then, again, it can not be the case that pure consciousness experiences consist in a complex representation of such physiological changes. Thus, again, Tye's strong representationalist approach to moods can not

successfully account for pure consciousness experiences.

4.5 Illusions

The final two approaches we must consider in determining whether Tye's strong representationalism can account for pure consciousness experiences are those involving illusions and hallucinations. Let us begin with Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions. In cases of illusion, there is an actual object of perception, but "the perceived object appears other than it is"[297] and thus "the perceptual experience is inaccurate ... because the object is not as it appears to be."[298] An experience "is accurate if and only if the object *has* [its] apparent properties."[299] (emphasis supplied) Examples of illusions include a stick in water that appears bent when it is actually straight,[300] a line that appears longer than another line when they are actually the same length,[301] or two objects of the same color that appear to be different colors (perhaps due to lighting conditions or the colors of objects next to them).

When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, one could argue that the so-called buzz is an illusory property of a perceived object. For this to be the case, the buzz must be an apparent property of an object, but not a property that the object actually has. Given that no properties other than a buzz are present in pure consciousness experiences, if the buzz is only an apparent property and not a

297Tye, "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience" at 541.
298Tye, "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience" at 541-542.
299Tye, "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience" at 542.
300Tye, "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience" at 550.
301This occurs in the well-known Müller-Lyer illusion.

property that the object actually has, then the experience does not include any properties that the object actually has. This would be akin to saying, for example, that a whistling sound unaccompanied by any other properties is an illusory perception of a green chair because, even though none of the typical properties of the green chair (such as its color and shape) are present in the experience, the whistling sound is an apparent property of the chair. It seems more likely that cases that involve no actual, non-illusory properties of an object would be instances of hallucination (to be discussed below) rather than illusion, but one could argue that if there is sufficient causal connection between an object and a perceived property, then it is actually a case of illusion and not of hallucination. For example, just as the perception of bentness can not occur if there is no stick, perhaps the perception of a buzz can not occur if there is no object x. Given that pure consciousness experiences involve nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz, though, then it must be the case that either only a single object is being illusorily perceived (and thus everything else present in the environment must somehow be prevented from being represented in experience), all objects in the environment are illusorily perceived as having only the property of a buzz and all of the buzzes are the same and undifferentiable (including undifferientiable with regard to spatial location), or all objects in the environment are illusorily perceived as having only the property of a buzz and all of the buzzes somehow combine such that the experience is one of an undifferentiated buzz.[302]

302It could also be the case that multiple objects in the environment are illusorily perceived as having only the property of a buzz while other objects in the environment are not represented in experience, but examining such cases adds nothing to the discussion.

Regardless of which of the above options one prefers, anyone who wants to account for pure consciousness experiences in terms of illusion must accept that the so-called buzz is an illusory property of an object or objects and that the object or objects are being perceived despite no non-illusory properties of the object or objects being represented in experience. One must further accept that such illusions are rare and usually only occur in cases of advanced meditators. In addition to accepting these things, one is left with the burden of showing how an object or objects produce this illusory property and why such illusions are so rare. Given all of this, accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions does not seem very palatable.

There is another approach to accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of illusions, however, that we have not yet explored. Let us go back to the stick in the water example. One way to interpret what happens in such a case is to say that the stick illusorily appears bent when it is actually straight, thus taking on the (illusory) property of being bent, but another way to interpret the situation is to say that the stick loses its (nonillusory) property of being straight. In other words, in the latter interpretation, rather than the addition of a property that is not usually present, the illusion involves the lack of a property that is usually perceived. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, one could take the position that the perceived object or objects include the property of a buzz and the illusion comes in in that the perceived object or objects lack all other properties that are usually perceived. Perhaps, for example, experiences of

blue triangles typically represent the properties of blue, triangular, and buzziness, but pure consciousness experiences are illusory in that the experience is of a blue triangle, but buzziness is the only typical property (and only property of any sort) represented in experience.[303] Anyone wanting to account for pure consciousness experiences in such a way must accept that illusions can involve a lack of ordinarily represented properties as opposed to only the presence of not ordinarily represented properties and, further, that illusions can occur that have such an extreme lack of ordinarily represented properties, that pure consciousness experiences involve the perception of one or more objects, and that whatever object or objects are perceived during pure consciousness experiences have the property of buzziness. While more palatable than the previous attempt to account for pure consciousness experiences in terms of illusions, it is unlikely to prove a very popular account and thus accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions, while possible, comes at costs that many are unlikely to accept.

4.7 Hallucinations

Finally, we turn to Tye's strong representationalist approach to hallucinations. Tye is perhaps best known for his "gappy content" account of hallucinations, but this account is not consistent with strong representationalism.[304] Tye has also recently rejected the gappy content account in favor of two

303 Of course this example is used for illustrative purposes only. Certainly not all, and perhaps no, pure consciousness experiences have occurred while a blue triangle was in the experiencer's line of sight.

304 Briefly, Tye's gappy content account (also known as the singular (when filled) thesis) attempts

alternatives, neither of which he fully endorses or rejects. These alternatives are the possible worlds approach and the content* approach. Only the content* approach is consistent with strong representationalism and I will therefore here only consider whether the content* approach can account for pure consciousness experiences.[305]

The content* approach is based on the idea of failed demonstrations. For example, one can utter a sentence that includes the demonstrative "that" regardless of whether there is an actual object to which "that" refers. "Where the context lacks a demonstrated object, 'that' lacks a content with respect to that context. The term 'that' does, however, have a linguistic meaning and thus a content*."[306] Continuing with this idea, when it comes to hallucinatory experiences, the experience lacks a content, but has a content*.[307] Under the content* approach, all experiences have a content*, but it is not the case that content* always includes an actual object (or, in other words, always includes a singular content). For example, if I hallucinate a red square, the content* of my experience includes the properties of red and square. If I actually see an object x that is a red square, the

---

to explain how an experience can be about a nonexistent object. Tye suggests that hallucinatory experiences are just like veridical experiences "except that where [a veridical experience] has a concrete object in it, [a hallucinatory experience] has a gap. The two contents, thus, have a common structure [which] may be conceived as having a slot in it for an object. In the case of [veridical experience] the slot is filled by the [actual object]. In the case of [hallucinatory experience], the slot is empty." See Tye, Michael (2007) "Intentionalism and the Argument from No Common Content." *Philosophical Perspectives* 21(1):589-613 at 594. This account is not consistent with strong representationalism because a phenomenal experience can be the same in the veridical and hallucinatory cases, but the content of the experience is different (in that the content of the veridical experience includes an actual object and the content of the hallucinatory experience includes a gap, or empty slot).

305For more on the possible worlds approach, as well as Tye's reasons for rejecting the gappy content approach, see Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?"

306Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?" at 13.

307Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?" at 13.

content* of my experience includes the properties of red and square as well as the actual object x.[308]

Under the content* approach, for pure consciousness experiences to be accounted for as hallucinations, the buzz can not be an object of consciousness, but rather only a property represented in conscious experience. Tye suggests that one does not need to have previously experienced a property for it to be part of a hallucination, so whether or not one has ever previously experienced such a buzz is irrelevant when it comes to whether the buzz of pure consciousness experiences can be accounted for in terms of hallucinations.[309]

One might reasonably argue against the content* approach in general. In providing approaches to hallucinations, Tye attempts to account for the fact that a hallucinatory experience can be phenomenally the same as a non-hallucinatory experience. If, however, the content* of two experiences is different with the only difference being that one experience is veridical and thus includes an actual object in the content* and the other is hallucinatory and thus does not include an actual object in the content*, it seems that, despite this difference in content*, the phenomenal experiences would be the same. Conversely, if two phenomenal experiences are the same, it is unclear how there could be a difference in their content*. If there is a difference in content* without a difference in phenomenal experience, then, in one of the cases, not all content* is being represented in the experience. This results in multiple realizability, which, as Tye acknowledges, is

308Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?" at 13, 14.

309At one point Tye asks us to "[s]uppose that you have never seen any red things and then, one day, you hallucinated a red car." Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?" at 14 fn 21.

inconsistent with strong representationalism because strong representationalism "identif[ies] phenomenal character with representational content."[310,311]

If one does accept Tye's content* approach, then it arguably can account for pure consciousness experiences as hallucinations. After all, given that in cases of hallucination all that is included in content* are the properties represented in the experience and Tye does not require that one have previously experienced these properties, the content* approach seems to be able to account for any phenomenal experience as an hallucination. However, a problem we have encountered before returns. To account for pure consciousness experiences in terms of the content* approach to hallucinations, one must not only account for the buzz in terms of hallucination, but one must also account for the fact that the experience includes nothing other than the buzz. Therefore, one must explain why the experience lacks any veridical input, input from memory, thought, etc. Further, one must also again explain why such experiences are so rare and why they typically only occur in the case of advanced meditators. While one could appeal to physiological occurrences to explain this lack of additional content in the experience and the rarity of the experience, an additional problem remains in that although the content* approach does not require an actual object of experience, it still requires represented properties and thus the buzz must still be a represented property. To be a represented property, arguably it must at least sometimes be instantiated. If the represented property must at least sometimes be

310Tye, "What Is the Content of Hallucinatory Experience?" at 14.
311Tye, "Intentionalism and the Argument from No Common Content" at 608, 609.

instantiated, then we are brought back to the question of what the object of experience could be in cases of pure consciousness. If content* includes a represented property that is never instantiated, then it is unclear in what sense such a thing could actually be considered to be a represented property given that it is neither a property nor does it represent anything. Thus Tye's content* approach to hallucinations is of no help in providing a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences.

Having considered the various ways in which Tye's strong representationalist theory of phenomenal consciousness might account for pure consciousness experiences, I now turn to ways that strong representationalism might account for pure consciousness experiences that have not already been addressed in considering Tye's theory. While numerous people have written extensively in defense of a representationalist approach to phenomenal consciousness, most of these writings focus exclusively on veridical perception and/or bodily sensations and, while the details of the particular representationalist theory defended may vary, when it comes to accounting for pure consciousness experiences, the vast majority of these various theories offer no potential solutions that do not (at best) ultimately boil down to the issues that have already been brought out in examining Tye's theory.[312] Thus I will leave most of these theories

312An example of a representationalist approach that, at least when it comes to pure consciousness experiences, ultimately boils down to issues already discussed in connection with Tye is that involving propositional content. According to such an approach, rather than an experience being, say, *of* a chair, the experience expresses (not necessarily linguistically) the proposition *that* there is a chair before me. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences I am not sure what the corresponding proposition would even be, but it must be something like

unmentioned and consider only those approaches that offer a potentially successful way of accounting for pure consciousness experiences that has not already been considered.

4.7 Afterimages

In defending a certain view of representationalism, Georges Rey suggests that afterimages are "the contents of the brain states that underlie experiences"[313] (emphasis removed) and that, as would also be the case for phantom limbs, the representations can misrepresent the location of properties.[314] This idea is certainly not entirely different than ideas that Tye addresses, but it does raise a possibility that Tye seems to disallow.[315] If the content of an experience is actually located in one place, but the experience can represent the object or property as being located somewhere that it is not, then perhaps pure consciousness experiences can also represent an object or property as being located somewhere it is not or nowhere at all even if it is actually located somewhere. Thus, following a similar idea as that presented in connection with

the proposition that there is buzziness. If such an approach is to remain representational, the proposition must represent (rather than *be*) the state of affairs and thus there must still be external content represented in the proposition. Thus we must figure out what content the buzziness represents and we are brought back to the investigation already undergone in connection with Tye's theory and to be continued in connection with theories that raise possibilities that Tye's theory does not. Another example can be found in the various attempts to provide a representationalist account of hallucinations. Regardless of whether one thinks that hallucinations involve no object or a possible or existential object (or perhaps something else), we are brought back to the issue of represented properties that must at least sometimes be instantiated.

313Rey, Georges (1998) "A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience." *Philosophical Perspectives* 12:435-457 at 435.

314Rey, "A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience" at 438.

315To recall, Tye says that "attention does not go to where your experience is located (that is, to your head, if your experience is a physical thing) or to nowhere at all." Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 142.

Tye's bodily sensations account, perhaps the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a represented property of certain brain waves (or, again, whatever the relevant physical realizer is), but not necessarily brain waves located in the same time and space as the experience itself. As already suggested, there are two such possibilities here. One is that brain waves (or, for that matter, anything else) are represented as a buzz, but the buzz is misrepresented as being located in the same place as the experience of the buzz and thus pure consciousness experiences involve no awareness of spatial location. The other possibility is that brain waves (or, again, anything else) are represented as a buzz, but the buzz is misrepresented as not being located anywhere. With both of these possibilities we again face the usual problems of explaining how there are no other contents of experience and also why such experiences are so rare. Also, when it comes to the first possibility, we have the problem of explaining why, while other types of experience involve the misrepresentation of location, no other types of experience misrepresent the location of a property as being in the experience itself rather than somewhere external to the experience. Further, this possibility is problematic in that if the buzz is represented as being located in experience, then it is represented as having a location, but pure consciousness experiences do not involve awareness of any sort of location at all and thus this first possibility can not work. When it comes to the latter possibility, we have the problem of explaining how a represented property could be represented as not being located anywhere. In the case of afterimages the afterimage is represented as being located before you and is not

represented as being located nowhere at all. Even in cases of imagining a patch of color, for example, the patch of color still has some degree of spatial location to it. Even if one finds that the patch of color does not seem to be located anywhere in particular, it is still two-dimensional and thus is still located in some sort of space even if that space is in some sort of realm of imagination. Thus the imagined patch of color still has some sort of spatial location rather than no spatial location at all. Further, given that the represented object does have a spatial location, if the object is represented as not having a spatial location, then the represented property is illusory and we are brought back to the discussion of illusions and the unpalatable costs of accounting for pure consciousness experiences in such a way.

4.8 Sense-Data

Alex Byrne raises the possibility that what is being represented in experience is the properties of sense-data, as opposed to the properties of external objects themselves. Unlike most others who raise this possibility, Byrne finds sense-data "perfectly compatible"[316] with representationalism. This view explains how a veridical experience of, say, a red apple and a hallucination of a red apple can be exactly the same phenomenally. The two experiences are phenomenally exactly the same because in both cases the object of experience is a red, apple-shaped sense-datum and the experiences are experiences of the properties of the sense-datum. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, the object of experience could be a sense-datum that has the property of buzziness and lacks

316Byrne, "Intentionalism Defended" at 225.

any visual, olfactory, etc. properties and also lacks any properties related to spatial dimension or time or, alternatively, has (somehow) the property of appearing to lack any spatial dimension or extension in time. Of course, to accept such an account of pure consciousness experiences, one not only has to accept sense-data, but also has to accept that sense-data can have or lack the properties in question. Although many may be reluctant to accept such things for various reasons, including the fact that accepting sense-data rids representationalism of the ability to account for phenomenal experience without appeal to something nonphysical and mysterious, the sense-data approach to representationalism can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences in this way. However, accepting sense-data also means accepting that all experiences are of sense-data and thus, while representationalism still plays a key role in such a view, it no longer does as much explanatory work as representationalists would generally like it to because the big questions now become what sense-data actually are and how it is that they are represented in experience (as opposed to just being the experience itself or the building blocks that constitute the experience) and phenomenal consciousness can no longer be explained by merely appealing to representational content.

4.9 Other mysterious entities

Another way that pure consciousness experiences could arguably be taken to be representational is to appeal to ideas found in one or more of the traditions discussed in Chapter 1 and say that pure consciousness experiences are of God or

ayin or Brahman, etc. However, within these traditions themselves, pure consciousness experiences are generally not taken to be *of* such things, but are rather considered to actually *be* these things and thus not to be representational at all. To take such a position one would further have to accept the existence of such things (or at least one of them) and accept that it is something that exists independently enough of the experience that the experience can be of it rather than just being the actual thing itself. Of course one is not restricted to the ideas of these traditions and could posit some other entity that is being represented in pure consciousness experiences. However, explaining how such an entity is represented in pure consciousness experiences beyond simply making the brute claim that it is represented (assuming such an explanation is possible) will likely be a difficult task for anyone who takes such an approach. Also, as in the case of sense-data, taking such an approach seems to leave much more unexplained than it resolves. Of course, however, this problem alone is not sufficient reason to reject such an approach.

4.10 Summary

So where does all of this leave us? As just discussed, one could take the position that pure consciousness experiences are nothing more than the represented properties of a sense-datum or something such as God, Brahman, etc. But what are the possibilities if one wants to avoid such mysterious entities? Representationalist approaches to veridical perception, emotions, moods, and

hallucinations have all been found to be unable to account for pure consciousness experiences. A representationalist approach to illusions can successfully account for pure consciousness experiences if, among other things, one is willing to take either a rather unusual view of illusions and what counts as perceiving an object or a rather unusual view of illusions and the position that the undifferentiated buzz is a nonillusory property of the perceived object. The final option is to account for pure consciousness experiences via a representationalist approach to bodily sensations. Under such an approach pure consciousness experiences involve the representation of a body part as nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz and both the represented body part and the experience of the represented body part are located in the same space and time.

Thus we have three basic possibilities for providing a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences: We can account for such experiences as bodily sensations, illusions, or mysterious entities. However, if we want to avoid extra strong representationalism, as most, if not everyone, will want to, the next step is to find a way to make such accounts consistent with some way of delineating which representations in general are phenomenally conscious and which are not. I turn to that task now.

Chapter 5

Delineating Phenomenally Conscious Representations in a Way Consistent with Pure Consciousness Experiences

While representationalists think that phenomenal consciousness consists, either partly or entirely, of the represented properties of represented objects, representationalists generally do not think that all represented properties are phenomenally conscious. For example, most would likely agree that a thermometer can represent temperature yet is not phenomenally conscious, that a painting can represent a building yet is not phenomenally conscious, that low-level visual processing in the brain can represent properties of the environment yet is not phenomenally conscious, etc., etc. Thus there must be something other than representation itself that determines which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not. However, while representationalists generally agree with this, many do not address the question of what this something else might be and those that do sometimes simply claim that it has to do with functional role without providing an explanation of what sort of functional role is involved.

Once again Tye is perhaps the most notable exception to this and thus I begin with a detailed look at Tye's account. Tye's account is also arguably deserving of a detailed look given that Tye's strong representationalist account of phenomenal consciousness offers ways in which pure consciousness experiences might be successfully accounted for and thus it is worth considering whether Tye's

entire theory - his strong representationalist account combined with his delineation of functional role - might prove successful in accounting for pure consciousness experiences. Following this examination of Tye's theory I consider some of the other options for functional role that can be and have been invoked in delineating which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not.

5.1 PANIC

Tye puts forth what he calls the PANIC theory to delineate which representations are phenomenally conscious. According to the PANIC theory, representations are phenomenally conscious if they are poised (in a certain way), abstract, and nonconceptual. Hence, under the PANIC theory, "phenomenal character is one and the same as Poised Abstract Nonconceptual Intentional Content."[317] Because phenomenal character is one and the same as this sort of representational content, "representations that differ in their PANICs differ in their phenomenal character, and representations that are alike with respect to their PANICs are alike in their phenomenal character."[318]

I now turn to the question of whether accounting for pure consciousness experiences causes any problems for Tye's PANIC theory. The "Intentional Content" component of the PANIC theory simply refers to representational content as already discussed, so no new issues arise here. By "Nonconceptual," Tye means that "the general features entering into [the intentional content] need

317Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 137.
318Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 137-138.

not be ones for which their subjects possess matching concepts."[319] One can, for example, phenomenally experience a color for which one has no concept (either in terms of a name for the color, a stored representation of the color in memory, or any other sort of concept). Further, the phenomenal experience of this specific color is different than the phenomenal experience of another (perhaps similar) color for which one also has no concept. Thoughts and beliefs, on the other hand, do involve the application of concepts, such as, for example, the belief that the object I see before me is a chair, and thus my overall phenomenal experience may involve concepts, but this is not necessary.[320]

While people who have undergone pure consciousness experiences might believe that the experiences are of God, ayin, Brahman, or something else, any such beliefs are formed after the experience has ended. Even if one later undergoes another pure consciousness experience, any such belief is not part of the experience. As already explained, pure consciousness experiences are devoid of any thought, belief, desire, emotion, visual input, etc. and consist of nothing but an undifferentiated buzz. Even this buzz is not thought about or recognized as a buzz in any way during the experience. Because Tye allows for this sort of nonconceptual content, pure consciousness experiences are consistent with Tye's view in this regard.

When it comes to the "Abstract" component of the PANIC theory, Tye says that this component "is to be understood as demanding that no particular concrete

319Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 139.
320Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 139, 140, 156.

objects enter into [the intentional content] (except for the subjects of experiences in some cases)."[321] By this Tye means that "the phenomenal character of [one's] experience can be exactly the same"[322] regardless of what "particular object is present."[323] In other words, what matters for phenomenal character is "the representation of general features or properties"[324] and not their particular instantiation. If, for example, one sees a green cube and later sees an identical green cube from the same angle, under the same lighting conditions, etc., the phenomenal content of the two experiences will be the same even though the particular green cube that one sees is different. What is relevant to the phenomenal character of one's experience is not the particular object itself, but rather the general features or properties of the object such as color, shape, texture, etc.[325]

If the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is taken to be a general feature or property, then pure consciousness experiences seem to be consistent with this criterion of abstractness. If one object or another has the same buzz as a represented property, then the experience will be the same and exactly which object's property is being represented is not part of the experience. For example, if one uses Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions to account for pure consciousness experiences, then regardless of whether one is experiencing the buzziness of a blue triangle, an identical blue triangle, or a green sofa, if each

321Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138.
322Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138.
323Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138.
324Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138-139.
325Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138-139.

has the same "buzziness," then one's experience will be the same because even though the object itself may be different, the property represented (the buzziness) is the same.[326] Similarly if one uses Tye's strong representationalist approach to bodily sensations to account for pure consciousness experiences. If the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a represented property of brain waves, then as long as the represented property is the same, one's experience will be the same, regardless of whether, for example, the same or different electrons are present from one such occurrence to the next. This is also the case when it comes to sense-data or any other mysterious entity if the actual object of experience is not always the same (for example, if it is not always the same sense-datum that is represented in pure consciousness experiences).

Again, according to the abstract criterion what matters for phenomenal experience is the represented property and not the particular instantiation of that property. If the object instantiating the property were part of phenomenal experience, then the object itself would be part of pure consciousness experiences along with the buzz, but pure consciousness experiences consist of nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz and thus any experience that included awareness of an object in addition to this buzz would not be a pure consciousness experience. Thus pure consciousness experiences are not only consistent with the abstract criterion, but seem to require such abstractness.[327]

326This holds regardless of which way one uses Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions to account for pure consciousness experiences. Whether the represented property is an actual property or an illusory property, one's experience is the same when the represented property is the same, even if the object that has the property is different.

327Unless, of course, the object and its property of buzziness were both represented in such a way that the resulting experience was still of a single, undifferentiated buzz.

One could argue, however, that the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is not a feature or property of an object, but rather an object itself. Such an argument could be seen as consistent with the views of various meditative traditions. Consider, for example, traditions that view pure consciousness experiences as awareness of ayin. Under such a view, one is aware not of a property or feature of ayin, but rather the thing itself. Thus a particular object is experienced. A similar argument could be made for traditions that view pure consciousness experiences as awareness of any other particular thing, such as, for example, God.[328]

This is not necessarily a problem for the abstract criterion. Tye's exception to the abstract criterion when it comes to the subjects of experiences suggests that an object may enter into intentional content if it is unique.[329] Given that ideas of ayin, Brahman, etc. all involve something that is single and universal and, in this way, unique, one could reasonably argue that an extension of this exception to the abstract criterion should apply.

One could also resolve this problem in another way. One could argue that an object is nothing more than a collection of properties. For example, if you start with a red ball and remove the properties of being red, being spherical, being solid, etc., you have nothing left. On such a view, the only way to distinguish between multiple red balls is via properties of spatiotemporal location. Applying

328Suggesting that Brahman, God, etc. is a particular object is not unproblematic given their alleged universality, but it is at the very least a view that could be taken.

329Regardless of whether all subjects are ultimately phenomenally unique, no one can experience another subject from the first-person perspective and therefore, due to this inability to experience other subjects, one's self is always unique in one's own experiences.

this view to the idea that pure consciousness experiences involve awareness of, say, Brahman, one could argue that if all of the properties of Brahman are removed,[330] then nothing remains. In this way, even if pure consciousness experiences do involve awareness of something such as Brahman, the experience is still an experience of represented properties and not of any object independent of these properties.

Regardless of which approach one prefers, pure consciousness experiences can be seen as consistent with the abstract criterion. Let us now turn to the final criterion of the PANIC theory: "Poised." Content is poised if it is the output of a "specialized sensory module"[331] and the (potential) input to a "higher-level cognitive system"[332] such as the belief or desire system. Content is the (potential) input to a higher-level cognitive system in that the content will be the input into the system that forms beliefs (or desires, etc.) if "attention is properly focused."[333] If, for example, one has a visual experience of a red ball, this is because the content of the experience (e.g., red and spherical) are the output of a visual processing module and, because attention is properly focused, one can, for example, (potentially) form beliefs about this object, such as the belief that the object is the same color as a fire hydrant, (potentially) have desires related to the object, such as the desire to throw this particular ball, etc. For pure consciousness experiences to satisfy this functionalist poised criterion of the PANIC theory, they

330This argument applies regardless of exactly what one takes the properties of Brahman to be.
331Tye, Michael (1998) "Precis of *Ten Problems of Consciousness*." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58(3):649-656 at 651.
332Tye, "Precis of *Ten Problems of Consciousness*" at 651.
333Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138.

must also be both the output of a sensory module and the (potential) input to the belief system or some other higher-level cognitive system.

If the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a represented property of an external object or objects, then even though it is not immediately clear how this property is perceived, it must be perceived in some way or else it could not be part of one's experience. Thus, the content of the experience must be the output of a sensory module. Given that, as discussed in Chapter 4, the senses traditionally thought to be involved in veridical perception (sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste) can not seem to account for pure consciousness experiences under Tye's strong representationalist approach, some sort of alternative mode of perception, and thus some alternative sensory module, must be involved if the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a represented property of an external object or objects. The need for such alternatives may give some even more reason to reject the approach of accounting for pure consciousness experiences via Tye's strong representationalist approach to illusions, given that the approach involves perceiving properties of external objects, albeit illusory properties.

Accounting for pure consciousness experiences via Tye's strong representationalist approach to bodily sensations may also involve a unique sensory module, but given the diversity of bodily sensations and thus the likely diversity of relevant sensory modules, the uniqueness in this context may seem less problematic. Further, although accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of bodily sensations may involve a unique sensory module,

such an account does not also require a unique way of perceiving the external environment and therefore may again seem less problematic. Similarly, accounting for pure consciousness experiences via sense-data or some other mysterious entity also removes the problem of requiring a unique way of perceiving the external environment, although such accounts add the problem of explaining how such an entity is perceived at all. In the case of sense-data, however, if all experience really involves the perception of sense-data there is no special problem when it comes to pure consciousness experiences.

Returning to the bodily sensations approach, while the idea of a unique sensory module may seem less problematic than in the illusions approach, accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of bodily sensations does require, however, that the location of the experience and the location of the represented body part are one and the same. Thus, based on the poised criterion, this location, to avoid problems with time lag (which will be discussed below), arguably must be not only the represented body part and the experience, but also the sensory module. If this is the case, then the content of the experience can not be an output of the sensory module in the way that the idea of output is usually conceived. This is because output is usually conceived of as different than the thing producing the output, but here the same location is both the output and the thing producing the output. Positing the idea of a sensory module that is simultaneously also both the represented body part and the location of the experience makes the sensory module seem extraneous.

One could argue that the idea of the sensory module must be kept because, after all, there is sensing going on in that one is phenomenally experiencing a bodily sensation. Taking this approach, though, seems to make Tye's PANIC theory less helpful than it is intended to be. On the idea that there are far more representations than those that are phenomenally conscious, the PANIC theory is intended to establish which representations are phenomenally conscious. If one interprets the component of being the output of a sensory module in a way such that anything that is phenomenally conscious is the output of a sensory module, then this sensory module component does no work. Instead of saying that a representation is phenomenally conscious in part *because* it is the output of a sensory module, we are now left with the position that whenever a representation is phenomenally conscious it is also the output of a sensory module. If we can freely interpret anything as a sensory module, then, with regard to this component of the PANIC theory, we are left with nothing more than we would be if we simply said that a representation is phenomenally conscious when it is phenomenally conscious.

A way to try to get around this problem and prevent the sensory module component from being meaningless would be to suggest that the represented properties of the brain waves (or whatever exactly is being represented) are entered into a sensory module, the output of which is the experience. One way to incorporate a sensory module that is distinct from the represented body part and the experience would be to suggest that the represented properties of the body part

in location x are entered into a sensory module in location y and then the output of the sensory module is the experience which is located at z.[334] One problem with this approach is that now the location of the represented body part and location of the experience are no longer one and the same. As pointed out previously, Tye says that in cases of bodily sensations, "[y]our attention does not go to where your experience is ... or to nowhere at all,"[335] but rather to the location of the represented body part. Again, though, during pure consciousness experiences, one is not aware of distinct locations. Thus, if pure consciousness experiences involve a represented body part at location x and the location of the experience is z, under Tye's strong representationalist approach to bodily sensations, one's attention would go to location x. Because location x and location z are different locations, one's attention would be directed somewhere other than the experience itself and thus it seems that one would be aware of spatial location, distinctness, or something similar, which is inconsistent with the lack of any differentiation during pure consciousness experiences.

A way to try to avoid this problem while still keeping the sensory module component of Tye's PANIC theory meaningful would be to suggest that, again, the represented properties of the relevant body part are entered into a sensory module, the output of which is the phenomenal experience, but this time in a way such that the represented body part and the output/phenomenal experience are in the same location. In other words, the represented body part is in location x, its represented

334Here, of course, x, y, and z all represent distinct locations.
335Tye, "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience" at 142.

properties enter into a sensory module in location y, and the output of the sensory module (the phenomenal experience) is also in location x. Now the location of the represented body part and the location of the experience are again one and the same. New problems have been created, however. Even if whatever processing occurs in the sensory module happens quite quickly, there is still some time that has lapsed. This means that location x is both the represented body part at time t and the phenomenal experience at time t+1. However, at time t+1, location x is still the represented body part, which will be represented in experience at time t+2. This seems to require that location x be two things at once, which seems problematic. Perhaps an example will make this problem more clear. Suppose there is a lump of clay that transforms into different musical notes on a bar staff.[336] In this example I am the sensory module and I output the represented property of the perceived object (i.e., the note on the bar staff) as the letter of the alphabet that corresponds to this note. If, however, I output the represented property into the same location (in this case, the same lump of clay), then a problem arises in that the lump of clay must simultaneously be both a note on a bar staff and a letter of the alphabet.[337] This, however, is not possible. Similarly, it seems that the represented body part and the experience containing this representation occurring at a slightly later time can not both be in the same location.

Perhaps, however, the represented body part and the experience containing

336How the clay transforms in this way is irrelevant. Even if the example could never actually occur, it should still serve to illustrate the problem.

337One can not get around this problem by suggesting that one section of the lump of clay is the note on a bar staff and another is the letter because now we are no longer talking about the same location and what is being represented and entered into the sensory module is no longer the lump of clay, but rather a portion of the lump of clay.

this representation are exactly the same. If, for example, as the sensory module, my job was to mold the clay into a note on a bar staff rather than a letter of the alphabet, then, as long as the note was always the same, I could accomplish this without actually doing anything to the clay. Thus, the clay could simultaneously both be the current note and a representation of a previously occurring note. Because pure consciousness experiences are uniform and lack any differentiation, the output/experience at any given time t could be exactly the same as the represented body part at time t even though the output/experience is of the represented body part at time t-1. As long as the output of sensory modules is defined in a way such that it can be passively rather than just actively created by sensory modules, the problem of time lapse seems to be averted.

One might object to this way of defining the output of sensory modules, however. Suppose that one continued to look at the same, unchanging visual scene for some period of time and suppose this visual scene included a red triangle. With regard to the red triangle, one could argue that once the sensory module processing this red triangle created the output, the sensory module would only have to passively continue to create the output and would only have to actively create output again if/when the visual scene changed. However, this may not be the case. Suppose phenomenal experience involves neuron activation. If it does, then the sensory module could not passively create output because the neuron activation would only last for a temporary amount of time and the neuron(s) would need to be reactivated for the visual experience to remain

unchanged. Thus, even though no new creations are made, the sensory module must continually actively produce output.

Continual active output by the sensory module may not be a problem if overdetermination is not a problem. If the body part in question has certain properties as the result of something other than the output of the sensory module and the output of the sensory module also causes these same properties in the same location, then though the sensory module is not the sole cause of the properties this does not matter because the same properties result nonetheless. However, this may not be the case when considering things at the neuronal level. A neuron fires if its action potential threshold is reached. This firing is all or nothing so as long as the action potential threshold is reached, the neuron will fire at the same action potential strength no matter how strong the stimulus is. Thus, even if there is overdetermination as the result of the output of the sensory module, as long as the output does not cause any excitation or inhibition in a way that impacts the reaching of any action potential thresholds, the result will still be the same when it comes simply to the strength of the triggered action potentials. Stimulus strength can, however, impact the rate at which neurons fire, with stronger stimuli generally causing more rapid firing.[338] Thus, if the output of the sensory module impacts the strength of a stimulus that meets an action potential threshold, the output is changing the properties of the body part and we are again returned to the time lapse problem.

338Weiten, Wayne (2010) *Psychology: Themes & Variations, Briefer Version, Eighth Edition*. Wadsworth at 72.

Let us suppose, though, that regardless of whether the output of the sensory module is active or passive, the result is such that the properties of the body part in question are not altered by the output. We thus avoid the time lapse problem, but we are still faced with another problem. The properties of the body part in location x are represented in phenomenal consciousness, which is also in location x and even though location x includes the output of the sensory module, no represented properties in location x have changed due to the output of the sensory module. This means that, according to Tye's PANIC theory, location x prior to the involvement of the sensory module is not phenomenally conscious, but location x after the involvement of the sensory module is phenomenally conscious even though there has been no change whatsoever in the represented properties of location x. If the same location has the same properties at two different times, there is no reason that it would be phenomenally conscious at one time and not at another time simply due to whether information of some sort passed through a sensory module or not.

Suppose that one has spent some time observing windows and has developed a theory according to which windows only have holes in them if balls have been thrown through them. Now suppose I throw a ball through a window, but it does not result in any change to the window. That is, the window already had a hole in it and my throwing the ball through the window did not change the hole in any way. Given that nothing about the window has changed, it does not make sense to say that the window does not have a hole in it prior to my throwing

the ball, but it does have a hole in it after I throw it. My throwing the ball is irrelevant to the window's being broken. The theory needs to be revised. Similarly, the problems with the various ways of trying to incorporate the sensory module component of Tye's PANIC theory into pure consciousness experiences suggest that Tye's PANIC theory needs to be revised.

Sensory module output is only one aspect of the PANIC theory's poised criterion. Let us now consider whether pure consciousness experiences are consistent with the other aspect of the poised criterion. To recall, this other aspect says that the content of experience must (at least potentially) be the input to a higher-level cognitive system such as the belief system.

Beliefs, desires, etc., at least to the extent that one is aware of them, involve something more than just an undifferentiated buzz and hence pure consciousness experiences do not involve any occurrent beliefs, desires, etc. However, according to Tye, for content to be phenomenally conscious, it does not have to immediately be the input of a higher-level cognitive system. Tye gives an example in which one visits a friend's house and notices no difference in the appearance of the dining room, but later, "in reflecting upon how the evening went"[339] suddenly realizes "that there was a new oil painting on the wall."[340] Tye says that even though the visual experience "did not ... elicit any change in ... belief"[341] at the time, it was still "a state that was poised in the relevant sense."[342]

339Tye, Michael (1997) "The Problem of Simple Minds: Is There Anything It Is like to Be a Honey Bee?" *Philosophical Studies* 88(3):289-317 at 294.
340Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 294.
341Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 294.
342Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 294.

This is because had "proper attention"[343] been paid, the visual experience would have impacted the person's beliefs. Thus, even though beliefs, desires, etc. may not occur during pure consciousness experiences, as long as such experiences can result in beliefs, desires, etc. at a later time, the input to a higher-level cognitive system component of the poised criterion seems to be met. Pure consciousness experiences seem to result, at the very least, in the belief that one underwent such an experience and, therefore, the input to a higher-level cognitive system component is arguably satisfied.

However, in the example involving the new painting in a friend's dining room, the reason Tye gives for the experience not eliciting any change in belief at the time is that attention was not properly focused. Similarly, Tye gives an example in which, despite being "distracted and focus[ing] [one's] thoughts elsewhere"[344] one still hears a loud drilling noise. Had one "paid proper attention, [one] would have noticed the noise at the time"[345] even though one did not. In this way, the drilling noise is phenomenally conscious, according to Tye, even though it is not the input to a higher-level cognitive system. If proper attention had been paid, the noise would have been the input to a higher-level cognitive system and thus the noise is phenomenally conscious. Such examples seem to pose a problem for Tye's PANIC theory when it comes to pure consciousness experiences. In these examples, the reason the content of the experience is not (immediately) the input to a higher-level cognitive system is that attention is not properly focused.

343Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 295.
344Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 294.
345Tye, "The Problem of Simple Minds" at 294.

In other words, attention is focused on a different part of the content of one's experience. During pure consciousness experiences, however, there is nowhere else for one's attention to be focused. One's experience consists solely of an undifferentiated buzz and thus if one's attention is focused on one's experience at all, it must be focused on the buzz. This means that either Tye's poised criterion is again problematic and the content does not have to be the input to a higher-level cognitive system for it to be phenomenally conscious or during pure consciousness experiences attention is either absent or focused somewhere other than the content of one's phenomenally conscious experience.

In the examples of the new painting in a friend's dining room and the loud drilling noise, one does not notice these things at the time of the experience. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, however, one does notice the buzz at the time of the experience. This strongly suggests that rather than attention being absent during such experiences, it is focused on the content of the experience (i.e., the buzz). This means that during pure consciousness experiences attention is "properly focused"[346] yet the content of the experience is not the input to a higher-level cognitive system.[347] This suggests that the second component of Tye's poised criterion is not satisfied.

One could also argue that this component of the poised criterion is not met based on Tye's claim that "systems that altogether lack the capacity for beliefs and

346Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 138.

347As already discussed, the content can later be the input to a higher-level cognitive system if one reflects upon the experience, but the point here is that the content is not immediately the input to such a system despite attention being properly focused.

desires cannot undergo phenomenally conscious states."[348] As already pointed out, one does not have occurrent beliefs, desires, etc. during pure consciousness experiences. Given this, one could argue that one even lacks the capacity for beliefs and desires at the time one undergoes a pure consciousness experience. Thus, if one were to add a temporal component to the idea of a system, one could define a system in a way such that it only exists during pure consciousness experiences. If one were to do this, then one has a system that lacks even the capacity for beliefs, desires, etc., yet is still phenomenally conscious and thus the input to a higher-level cognitive system component of the poised criterion is not satisfied. Although adding such a temporal aspect to the definition of a system may at first seem arbitrary, this initial impression may disappear for some when they consider some views of personal identity.[349]

One might argue against the satisfaction of the input to a higher-level cognitive system component on other grounds as well. On the view that pure consciousness experiences involve tapping into something such as ultimate reality itself, whatever this ultimate reality is, it seems to involve phenomenal consciousness at least in some sense. However, it seems to, ultimately at least, lack any beliefs, desires, etc. Thus there seems to be the presence of something that either is or is very similar to phenomenal consciousness yet without any higher-level cognitive systems. Of course, to make such an argument, one has to accept a metaphysical position that involves this sort of ultimate reality. Because

348Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 144.

349Some views of personal identity suggest that even small changes in psychology and/or physiology mean that the pre-change and post-change person are not the same person.

my present interest is not to explore the nature of such a metaphysical picture in any depth, I will not pursue the argument here.

Regardless of whether one accepts such a metaphysical picture or accepts a definition of "system" that includes a temporal component such that the system only exists during pure consciousness experiences, the input to a higher-level cognitive system component of the poised criterion of Tye's PANIC theory does not seem to be satisfied because the content of the experience is not immediately the input to a higher-level cognitive system even though attention is focused on the content of experience and one is aware of the content of the experience at the time of the experience. Thus neither the input to a higher-level cognitive system component nor the sensory module component of the poised criterion have been satisfied and pure consciousness experiences therefore suggest that Tye's PANIC theory is inadequate in establishing which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not.

The Poised component of Tye's PANIC theory can not simply be dropped because if we are left with only "ANIC," many things that are presumably not phenomenally conscious would meet the ANIC criteria. For example, a painting can have nonconceptual intentional content is that abstract in the relevant sense, but paintings are presumably not phenomenally conscious. As another example, lower-level processing in the visual system also meets the ANIC criteria, but also does not seem to be phenomenally conscious.

Perhaps there is a middle ground. While pure consciousness experiences

do not include any phenomenally conscious beliefs, if one takes the position that beliefs do not have to have any phenomenally conscious component and also that one can have an occurrent belief without having any phenomenally conscious awareness of that belief, then one could suppose that pure consciousness experiences are accompanied by one or more nonconscious beliefs about the experience and thus the content of pure consciousness experiences does serve as the input to a higher-level cognitive system. In this way, one of the two components of the Poised criterion are satisfied and we are left with "pANIC." The question then is whether the sensory module component of the Poised criterion is necessary. For the sensory module component to be necessary, there must be cases in which abstract nonconceptual intentional content is the input to a higher-level cognitive system, but is not phenomenally conscious. As already pointed out, a painting can have abstract nonconceptual intentional content and, further, one could form beliefs about the painting. However, it is not the content of the painting itself that is the input to a higher-level cognitive system, but rather one's visual representation of the painting that serves as the input to the higher-level cognitive system and thus the painting example does not serve as a counterexample to the pANIC approach. Similarly, one could argue that information reaching only the spinal cord's causing one to pull one's hand away from a hot surface involves abstract nonconceptual intentional content and that one forms beliefs based on this content. However, the content in question is, again, not the content that is the input to the higher-level cognitive system. If one

believes that the surface is hot, this seems to be due to the content making its way to the brain and the belief being formed based on the phenomenal experience of the content in the brain rather than the content in the spinal cord and/or due to, for example, seeing oneself pull one's hand away and thus the relevant content is the visual representation of the action and not the content in the spinal cord. If examples can be found of abstract nonconceptual intentional content that is the input to a higher-level cognitive system but not the output of a sensory module that is not phenomenally conscious, then the pANIC approach is unsuccessful. However, if no such example can be found, then it seems that the output of a sensory module component of the PANIC approach is extraneous and the pANIC approach can successfully delineate which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not provided that one accepts that one can have beliefs that are not phenomenally conscious in any way and that one is not aware of in any sense of aware that involves phenomenal consciousness (or that any phenomenally conscious component of a belief or awareness thereof consists of nothing more than an undifferentiated buzz). If one does not accept such a view of beliefs, then not only does the PANIC approach fail, but the pANIC approach fails as well.

5.2 Certain systemic representations

Fred Dretske offers a delineation of phenomenally conscious representations according to which phenomenally conscious experiences are

"those natural representations$_s$ that service the construction of representations$_a$, representations$_s$ that can be calibrated (by learning) to more effectively service an organism's needs and desires. They are the states whose functions it is to supply information to a cognitive system for calibration and use in the control and regulation of behavior."[350] Representations$_s$ are systemic representations, which are the representations that result when a state "derive[s] its indicator function - and, hence, its representational status - from the system of which it is a state."[351] Representations$_a$ are acquired representations, which are representations that result from a state that "acquire[s] its indicator function, not from the system of which it is a state, but from the type of state of which it is a token."[352] (emphasis removed) An example borrowed from Dretske should help to clarify this distinction. Suppose the system in question is a thermometer and the thermometer is designed such that when the mercury is at height x, it represents 0ºC. Thus, when at height x, the mercury represents$_s$ 0ºC because that is what it is supposed to represent based on the design of the system. However, I could relabel the thermometer so that height x is now labeled "time to buy a jacket" (or "time to do laundry" or anything else). The system, however, was not designed to indicate when I should buy a jacket (or do laundry, etc.) and thus when the mercury is at height x it represents$_a$ that it is time to buy a jacket (or do laundry, etc.). The basic idea is that a representation is systemic if it represents what the system was designed to represent. If the representation involves something more arbitrary, then it is an

350Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 19.
351Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 12.
352Dretkse, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 12-13.

acquired representation. Because visual systems are designed to represent visual information, auditory systems auditory information, etc., all sensory representations, on Dretske's view, are systemic. Things such as thoughts and beliefs, on Dretske's view, are acquired because they are much more easily changeable. For example, I might change my beliefs about what I am experiencing due to acquiring new information or knowledge, but the representational character of the perceptual aspects of my experience will remain unchanged.

Besides being systemic, for a representation to be phenomenally conscious, it must "supply information to a cognitive system for calibration and use in the control and regulation of behavior"[353] so as to "more effectively service an organism's needs and desires."[354] An example of calibration that Dretske provides is that of wearing glasses that make everything appear 30º to the left.[355] If worn long enough, the cognitive system calibrates this information so that things no longer look 30º to the left and can more easily be grasped.

When it comes to the basic idea of supplying information to a cognitive system, in considering pure consciousness experiences we are returned to the issues raised in considering the input to a higher-level cognitive system component of Tye's poised criterion. As long as this supplying of information does not have to include any immediate phenomenally conscious result or response the requirement seems compatible with pure consciousness experiences.

353Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 19.
354Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 19.
355Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* at 21.

Further, one could even argue, albeit somewhat speculatively, that one has a nonconscious desire to continue the pure consciousness experience and that the cognitive system regulates things such as breathing, heart rate, and/or brain activity in a way that help one to fulfill this desire. Of course this presupposes both that such physiological occurrences help to maintain the pure consciousness experience and that the cognitive system actually regulates such things and not just behavior that one is more typically thought to be able to control (such as, for example, moving ones limbs). Given Dretske's example of vision calibration when wearing the glasses that make everything appear 30º to the left, it seems that the cognitive system is able to regulate these sorts of physiological occurrences.

A problem may come in, however, when it comes to calibration. In the case of the glasses that make everything appear 30º to the left, the calibration impacts the way things appear or, alternatively put, the way things are represented to be. Given that, if representational at all, the only property represented in pure consciousness experiences is that of a buzz, it is not clear in what way this could, or would need to be, calibrated. If the buzz is a representation, then arguably it could, and needs to be, calibrated in a way such that one becomes aware of the object represented during the experience. In other words, the experience could be calibrated in a way that one becomes aware that the buzz is a property of brain waves or of a sofa or of a sense-datum, etc. However, even in the case of advanced meditators who have had numerous pure consciousness experiences, such calibration never occurs. Thus, to the extent that Dretske's view requires as

opposed to allows for such calibration, the calibration component seems problematic. If, however, calibration is not actually required and the supplying of information to a cognitive system does not have to involve in any immediate phenomenally conscious result, then Dretske's delineation of which representations are phenomenally conscious seems to be consistent with pure consciousness experiences.

There seems to be reason, however, to question Dretske's delineation on other grounds. For example, cases of blindsight involve nonconscious representations of things such as the direction of slots and it seems that there is at least some possibility that these representations supply information to cognitive systems that can then calibrate the representation so that the subject is more successful at posting a letter through the slot. Also, it seems that learning how to walk or play a new sport involves representations of body mass, muscle positioning, etc. that is supplied to the cognitive system and calibrated so that we become increasingly successful at the task at hand. These examples suggest that there can be and are systemic representations that supply information to a cognitive system for use in calibration and control of behavior, but that these representations are not phenomenally conscious. Thus there seems to be reason to reject the sort of delineation that Dretske suggests. However, one might not consider such examples an objection to Dretske's view because the cognitive systems involved in such cases of learning and calibration are not the sort that involve beliefs, etc. that are accessible to phenomenal consciousness and of which

one can be directly aware. Thus whatever sort of cognitive system is involved is arguably not the sort of cognitive system Dretske invokes. Regardless of one's position on this issue, pure consciousness experiences do not themselves seem to provide a special reason to reject the delineation that Dretske suggests.

5.3 Other theories of phenomenal consciousness

William Lycan delineates phenomenally conscious representations from those that are not by invoking an inner-sense version of higher-order perception theory. One could similarly delineate phenomenally conscious representations by invoking other theories of phenomenal consciousness as well, such as another type of higher-order theory, an identity theory, or a cognitive or neuronal correlate theory. As already suggested in the introduction, barring future theoretical and/or empirical work suggesting otherwise, such theories are compatible with pure consciousness experiences. Thus, if pure consciousness experiences are representational, they, at least as far as can be currently known, are also consistent with a representationalist view that invokes such additional theories to delineate which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not.[356]

5.4 Summary

While there may be reason to question Dretske's delineation of

356In taking this position I am speaking rather generally. There of course can be versions of such theories that are not compatible with pure consciousness experiences, such as, for example, any such theory that requires that all phenomenally conscious mental states be available to introspection or any higher-order thought theory that requires some sort of nondemonstrative linguistic thought about the phenomenally conscious lower-order mental state.

phenomenally conscious representations, pure consciousness experiences can be seen as consistent with this delineation and as not providing any special reason to reject such delineation. Tye's PANIC approach is more problematic, but if one accepts the pANIC approach instead along with a view of beliefs that requires neither that they be phenomenally conscious nor that one be aware of them in a way that involves phenomenal consciousness (unless any phenomenal consciousness involved in the belief or awareness thereof consists of only an undifferentiated buzz), then Tye's general idea of delineation can be seen as consistent with pure consciousness experiences.

One need not accept Dretske's delineation nor the modified version of Tye's PANIC approach, however. Lycan's delineation via higher-order perception theory, barring future argument or evidence to the contrary, can successfully handle pure consciousness experiences, as can alternatives such as another type of higher-order theory, an identity theory, or a cognitive or neuronal correlate theory. Therefore, accounts delineating which representations are phenomenally conscious and which are not that are compatible with pure consciousness experiences are available and thus extra strong representationalism can be avoided.

Chapter 6

Impact of Pure Consciousness Experiences on Debates within Representationalism

Having established ways in which representationalism might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences and ways to delineate which representations are phenomenally conscious that are consistent with pure consciousness experiences, one might now wonder what, if any, impact a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences has on debates commonly found in literature on representationalism. Here I consider how a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences impacts debates on whether the content of experience is conceptual or nonconceptual, whether content is narrow or wide, whether phenomenal consciousness can be reduced to the physical, and whether representational experience is pure or impure.

6.1 Conceptual vs. nonconceptual content

Pure consciousness experiences do not involve any sort of concept within the experience and are not shaped by any sort of concept, but this does not necessarily mean that pure consciousness experiences support the position that at least some content is nonconceptual. Pure consciousness experiences do, however, put restrictions on what counts as conceptual for those wishing to take the position that all content is conceptual. I will use the example of unusual

shades of color to explain this.

As, for example, Tye points out, "humans can discriminate many, many more colors than"[357] those for which they have names and/or "stored representations in memory."[358] This leads Tye to take the position that when one has a phenomenal experience of a color for which they have no name or stored representation in memory, the content of the experience must be nonconceptual.[359] Others, such as John McDowell, accept what Tye says about humans and colors, but still take the position that all content is conceptual. This is because when one has a phenomenal experience of an unusual color, still "one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience, by uttering phrases like 'that shade', in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample."[360] On such a view one does not need a name or stored representation, but rather only needs the phenomenal experience itself to linguistically express the concept of the color in question. Thus the content of the experience is conceptual even though the person having the experience has no name for or stored representation of the content of the experience.

Pure consciousness experiences are similar to experiences of unusual shades of color in this way because, like unusual shades of color, even if one has no relevant word or stored representation, the experience can still be referred to demonstratively. However, pure consciousness experiences put more restraints on what counts as a concept than does something such as an unusual shade of color.

357Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 139.
358Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 139.
359Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* at 139.
360McDowell, John (1996) *Mind and World*. Harvard University Press at 57.

For McDowell, for example, "what ensures that [the phenomenal experience of the unusual shade of color] is a concept"[361] includes one retaining this phenomenal experience in memory "into the future, if only for a short time"[362] such that "it can be used also in thoughts about what is by then the past, if only the recent past."[363] Perhaps unlike unusual shades of color, pure consciousness experiences can not be recalled fully even immediately after the experience has ended. As with recollections of pain, one can generally recall what the experience was like, but one can not recall the experience precisely nor recreate the experience through memory. Thus, anyone who wishes to take the position that all experiential content is conceptual can not require that the experience be fully recallable.

Pure consciousness experiences also put another constraint on what counts as a concept that experiences of unusual shades of color do not (or at least arguably do not). When it comes to unusual shades of color, one can (at least usually) demonstratively refer to the experience through an expression such as "my experience is like *this*" while one is undergoing the experience. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, however, one can only demonstratively refer to the experience in this way after the experience has ended because if one were to do so during the experience the experience would no longer be a pure consciousness experience. Thus, anyone taking the position that such experiences are conceptual can not require that the ability to demonstratively refer to the experience must be able to occur while the experience itself is occurring. Given

361McDowell, *Mind and World* at 57.
362McDowell, *Mind and World* at 57.
363McDowell, *Mind and World* at 57.

that pure consciousness experiences can not be fully recalled after the experience has ended, this means that demonstratively referring to the experience at a later time involves demonstratively referring to something in the past rather than demonstratively referring to something that currently exists (either an accurate recollection of the experience or the experience itself if the demonstrative reference occurs while one is still undergoing the experience).

Given all of this, to take the position that all content is conceptual one must accept one of two options. One option is to say that even though pure consciousness experiences can not be fully recalled, they can still be demonstratively referred to in a way that is sufficient to count as a concept. The other option is to say that demonstrative reference is not necessary and simply take the position that any distinct phenomenal experience counts as a distinct concept. If one is not willing to accept either of these options, then one can not take the position that all content is conceptual. Thus, while pure consciousness experiences do not resolve the question of whether or not all content is conceptual, they do restrict what can count as conceptual for anyone claiming that all content is conceptual.

6.2 Narrow vs. wide content

Mental content, be it intentional and/or phenomenal, is considered narrow if it is dependent only on the individual whose mental content it is (or, in other words, if it is dependent only upon the individual undergoing the mental state in

question). Mental content is considered wide if it is determined at least in part by one's environment. On the wide content view, two completely identical beings could have different mental content if they are in different environments because their mental content is not dependent just on them, but on aspects of their environment as well. An example borrowed from Hilary Putnam demonstrates what is meant by wide content:[364] Suppose two people each live in different environments and in one of these environments water is composed of H_2O and in the other environment water is composed of XYZ, but other than this compositional difference water in the two environments is completely indistinguishable. Now suppose that each of these people has an identical belief about water in their environment. For example, suppose each person has the belief that water is odorless. According to the wide content view, even though both of these people have the same belief and even though these two people may be identical in every way, the content of their belief is still different because, due to their different environments, one person's belief is about H_2O and the other person's belief is about XYZ. In this way, each person's mental state depends, at least in part, on their environment.

Such an example can also be used to argue for the wideness of (other types of) phenomenal content. Suppose the two people in the previous example each have a visual experience of water in their respective environments. If each person's phenomenal experience is nothing more than the properties of the object

364See Putnam, Hilary (1975) "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume VII: Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, Keith Gunderson, ed. University of Minnesota Press, 131-193.

of experience, then each person's phenomenal content is arguably wide. This is because, even though each person's visual experience is of a clear liquid, one person's visual experience is also of H_2O whereas the other person's visual experience is also of XYZ. In both this and the previous example involving belief, arguments in favor of wide content take the position that it does not matter that H_2O and XYZ are not explicitly part of the mental state in question because even though they are not, the mental state in question is still ultimately about H_2O or XYZ and thus the mental state in question is wide.

Pure consciousness experiences' impact on the debate over whether phenomenal content is narrow or wide depends on what one's reason(s) are for thinking that phenomenal content is wide (and, as we will see, there are reasons other than that presented in the above example for thinking that phenomenal content is wide). In some cases, pure consciousness experiences are consistent with both views of phenomenal content. For example, suppose two people have an identical phenomenal experience of a tomato, however, the tomato represented in one person's experience is a real tomato and the tomato represented in the other person's experience is a very realistic fake tomato. One could argue that even though the two experiences are phenomenally identical, they are still different because one is an experience of a real tomato while the other is an experience of a fake tomato. However, one could alternatively argue that the property of being real or fake is not part of the experience and thus the two experiences are not different. These same types of views apply to pure consciousness experiences.

Suppose two people have a pure consciousness experience, but in one case the buzz is a represented property of object x and in the other case the buzz is a represented property of object y (and object x and object y are different objects). One could argue that the contents of the experiences are identical because the experiences themselves are identical and the represented properties are identical, but one could also argue that the contents of the experiences are different because they are ultimately about different things (one is about object x and the other is about object y). Thus pure consciousness experiences are subject to these same sorts of arguments in favor of and against narrow or wide phenomenal content as are other types of phenomenally conscious experiences.

Some arguments for wide phenomenal content, however, are based on some sort of (potential) occurrent belief or other introduction of concepts and pure consciousness experiences do impact at least some such arguments for wide content. For example, suppose that one person grows up in a environment with lots of papayas and has seen, tasted, etc. lots of papaya juice and, further, that papaya juice is the only orange-colored juice that this person or any other members of this person's community has ever encountered. Suppose that some other person grows up in an environment with lots of carrots and has seen, tasted, etc. lots of carrot juice and, further, that carrot juice is the only orange-colored juice that his person or any other members of this person's community has ever encountered. Now suppose that each of these people has a phenomenally identical visual experience of orange liquid in a glass. One could argue that

despite the two experiences being phenomenally identical, the experiences are still different because if thinking about or reporting on the experience, one person will think or say that the experience is of papaya juice and the other person will think or say that the experience is of carrot juice. Thus the content of the experience is wide because even though the two experiences are phenomenally identical, one person believes their experience is of papaya juice and the other person believes their experience is of carrot juice and these beliefs are based on factors external to the experience itself.

As another example, suppose that two people each have similar concepts of "chair," but there is some difference between each person's concept. Say, for example, one person's concept of chair includes the idea that chairs must have some sort of leg or legs that raises them off the ground and thus does not consider a beanbag chair to be a chair and the other person's concept of chair includes the idea that chairs must have backs to them and thus does not consider a backless stool to be a chair. Now suppose that each of these people has an identical visual experience of an ordinary kitchen chair (that has four legs and a back and thus falls under both people's concepts of "chair"). The reason each of these people has a visual experience of a chair instead of a visual experience of closely located but unrelated shapes is because each of their concepts of "chair" results in their visual system grouping these closely located shapes into a single object. Thus, each person has a visual experience of a chair due to their concept of "chair" impacting, or shaping, the visual input. Because of this, although each person's

visual experience is phenomenally identical, their visual experiences have been shaped by different "chair" concepts and thus, although phenomenally identical, the experiences are actually different, and the content of the experiences is wide, because they have been shaped by different concepts and these concepts are extrinsic to the experience itself.

In both of these examples, as with other examples of wide phenomenal content, the content of the experience can be considered wide because of its close relationship with a concept that is dependent on something other than the experience itself. In the first example, it is each person's externally-based belief about the kind of juice they are seeing that makes the content of their visual experience wide. When it comes to pure consciousness experiences, while one can not have an occurrent belief about the experience while undergoing the experience, after the experience ends one person could believe that the experience was of, say, Brahman, while another person could believe that the experience was of, say, ayin, and in this way pure consciousness experiences could be considered wide. Due to the nature of pure consciousness experiences, however, any such belief-based argument for wide phenomenal content must not require that the belief (potentially) take place simultaneously with the experience or that one be able to report on the experience while the experience is occurring. Thus, while pure consciousness experiences allow for wide content based on arguments regarding one's beliefs about or reports on one's experiences, pure consciousness experiences limit such arguments by limiting when these beliefs or reports can

occur.

Pure consciousness experiences have a greater impact in situations such as the second example, where the argument for wide phenomenal content is based on the externally-based concept shaping the experience itself. Such a situation is an arguably more convincing example of wide phenomenal content given that the relevant externally-based concept impacts the experience itself and is not merely a separate belief about or report on the experience, as in the earlier example. Such a situation, however, is inconsistent with pure consciousness experiences, meaning that even if some phenomenal content is wide for such a reason, not all phenomenal content is wide. Pure consciousness experiences lack any sort of differentiation or any sort of content that can be shaped in any sort of way. Further, if an experience does have content that is shaped in any sort of way, then the experience is not a pure consciousness experience because, being shaped, it is not pure or undifferentiated. Therefore, any argument for wide phenomenal content that is based on concepts impacting or shaping phenomenal experience can not apply to pure consciousness experiences and thus, while any such argument may establish that at least some content is wide, it does not and can not establish that all content is wide.

To summarize, the impact pure consciousness experiences have on the debate over whether phenomenal content is narrow or wide depends on the motivation(s) for thinking that phenomenal content is wide. Pure consciousness experiences have no special impact on some aspects of the debate over whether

phenomenal content is narrow or wide, but pure consciousness experiences can serve to limit some arguments in favor of wide content and even serve as a counterexample to other such arguments. Thus, while pure consciousness experiences do not rule out wide phenomenal content, they do limit the arguments than can be made in favor of the position that all phenomenal content is wide.

6.3 Reductionism vs. nonreductionism

One reason some find representationalism appealing is that it can arguably explain phenomenal consciousness without resorting to anything nonphysical. If phenomenally conscious experiences are nothing more than represented properties of objects and these represented properties can be explained in entirely physical terms, then phenomenal consciousness can be explained in entirely physical terms. Others, however, do not agree that representationalism is successful in reducing phenomenal consciousness to the physical and, regardless of one's position on this issue, representationalism is compatible with a nonreductionist view of phenomenal consciousness. The question at hand is whether a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences supports or requires a reductionist or nonreductionist view.

If we take pure consciousness experiences to represent either sense-data or something such as God or Brahman, then unless one accepts an expansive view of the physical in which such things are considered physical, such an account of pure consciousness experience is problematic for reductionism. If what is represented

is a nonphysical entity, then there are four possibilities when it comes to the question of reduction.

One possibility is that the nonphysical entity's represented properties are also nonphysical and thus if phenomenal experience is nothing more than the represented properties of the object in question, phenomenal experience is also nonphysical. Another possibility is that the nonphysical entity's represented properties are physical properties and thus if phenomenal experience is nothing more than the represented properties, phenomenal experience is also physical. This possibility, however, has the problem of explaining how a nonphysical entity can have physical properties. Further, while this possibility makes phenomenal consciousness part of the physical world, it leaves other nonphysical entities to be explained and thus does not get around all of the problems relating to the nonphysical that reductionists seek to avoid. The third possibility is that the nonphysical entity's represented properties are nonphysical, but somehow, despite representing nonphysical properties, the phenomenal experience itself is physical. This possibility also retains problems relating to the nonphysical. The final possibility is that the nonphysical entity's represented properties are physical, but phenomenal experience is nonphysical. This unappealing final possibility not only retains, but exacerbates, problems relating to the nonphysical. Thus, unless one takes an expansive view of the physical that includes the represented mysterious entity, accounting for pure consciousness experiences in terms of some such mysterious entity is incompatible with a completely physicalist position.

If we account for pure consciousness experiences as illusions, then as long as the object and its illusory properties are physical, pure consciousness experiences add nothing to the debate between reductionists and nonreductionists. If the represented object and its properties are physical, then one can take the position that the phenomenally conscious experience is nothing more than the represented properties and thus the phenomenally conscious experience is physical or one can take the position that even though the object and its properties are physical, the phenomenally conscious representation of those properties still involves something nonphysical (or is entirely nonphysical).

On the bodily sensations approach to accounting for pure consciousness experiences, the represented body part and the phenomenally conscious experience of the represented body part are one and the same. Thus, if the represented body part is physical (as most would agree that it is), then, given that the phenomenally conscious experience and the represented body part are one and the same thing, the phenomenally conscious experience must also be physical. Therefore the bodily sensations approach both allows for and requires a reductionist view of phenomenal consciousness.

Thus when it comes to the question of whether a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences supports or requires a reductionist or nonreductionist view of phenomenal consciousness, the answer depends on which representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences one accepts. A bodily sensations account of pure consciousness experiences requires a

reductionist view of phenomenal consciousness, an illusions account of pure consciousness experiences is compatible with both a reductionist and a nonreductionist view of phenomenal consciousness, and a mysterious entities account of pure consciousness experiences requires either a nonreductionist view of phenomenal consciousness or a very expansive view of the physical.

6.4 Pure vs. impure representationalism

Suppose there is a round ball before one. If one looks at the ball, the ball's property of being spherical is represented in experience. If one feels the ball, the ball's property of being spherical is again represented in experience. However, even though the represented property is the same, one's phenomenal experience is different if one looks at as opposed to touches the ball. Because of this, impure representationalists argue that in addition to the properties of the object in question being represented in experience, the mode of representation (in this case visual or tactile) is also represented in experience. Pure representationalists, however, reject this explanation of the difference between visually and tactilely experiencing the ball. Pure representationalists argue that mode of representation is not part of experience; rather, the property represented in experience is actually not the same in the visual and tactile experiences of the ball. When visually experiencing the ball what is represented in experience is, say, light reflectance properties and when tactilely experiencing the ball what is represented in experience is, say, properties of surface curvature. On the pure representationalist

view, the mode of representation is not part of experience; rather, the difference between visual, tactile, auditory, etc. experiences is solely a difference in what properties of the object are represented.

Pure consciousness experiences are, again, completely undifferentiated. Thus pure consciousness experiences can not include a mode of representation in addition to a represented property. Therefore, if pure consciousness experiences consist of the represented properties of an object of experience, then they can not also include a distinct mode of representation.

Tim Crane, however, argues that represented properties and modes of representation "have a common core."[365] Experiences involve both "things seeming a certain way"[366] and things "seem[ing] a certain way to a subject."[367] In this way, experience consists of the represented properties of an object, but the fact that the properties are represented from a certain point of view is also recognized. Thus experience consists of both an object's represented properties and one's point of view of the object's represented properties, but one's point of view is ultimately just composed of the object's represented properties, hence the common core. One could take a pure representationalist approach and argue that if one's point of view consists of nothing more than the object's represented properties, then there is no mode of representation that is separable from or that is above and beyond the represented properties themselves. Regardless of the success (or lack thereof) of such an argument, pure consciousness experiences do

365Crane, Tim (2009) "Intentionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, Brian P. McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann, and Sven Walter, eds. Clarendon Press, 474-493 at 486.
366Crane, "Intentionalism" at 486.
367Crane, "Intentionalism" at 486.

not include a point of view. If pure consciousness experiences included a point of view, then there would be the possibility to experience the same represented property from a different point of view and this difference in point of view would entail a difference in phenomenal experience, which is problematic. Also, if there could be a difference in experience due to a difference in point of view, then there would be at least two components to the experience, those components being the represented property and one's point of view of the represented property, and thus the experience in question would not be a pure consciousness experience. Because pure consciousness experiences do not involve a point of view, they can not be impure even if one were to accept Crane's "common core" idea in an effort to allow for impure representationalism while attempting to avoid allowing the experience to have more than one component.

So it seems that pure consciousness experiences are inconsistent with the idea of impure representationalism. Of course this does not necessarily mean that other types of experience are not impure in this way, but this does mean that not all experiences are impure and thus impure representationalists can only take the position that at least some experiences are impure and not the position that all experiences are impure.

One could argue, however, that a single property or quale can simultaneously represent more than one thing. For example, a painting of Times Square could be said to represent, say, the particular buildings in the painting, Times Square, New York City, capitalism, and/or crowdedness. Some or all of

these representations are possible without any change to the painting itself. Similarly, a red octagon might be said to represent color, shape, and the concept of "stop" and thus multiple things are represented without there being distinct contents for each of these representations. Suppose one person perceives an object as green. We might say that the green quale of the experience represents the light reflectance properties of the perceived object. However, suppose another person perceives the same object as red. We might then say that each person's experience represents a combination of the light reflectance properties of the perceived object and characteristics of the persons visual system. Thus arguably more than one property is represented in a single quale. If more than one property can be represented in a single quale, then even though pure consciousness experiences consist of a singe quale, they could represent more than one property. If this is the case, then this opens the door to impure representationalism if both the object's represented properties and the mode of representation are represented by the same quale. However, such a view of impure representationalism removes the "impureness" of impure representationalism because what is being represented under the heading "mode of representation" are actual properties of actual objects (such as components of the visual system or components of the auditory system). While one might not realize that these sorts of properties are being represented, they are being represented nonetheless and thus this attempt to make pure consciousness experiences compatible with impure representationalism has brought us brought back to pure representationalism and once again pure

consciousness experiences are inconsistent with the idea of impure representationalism.

6.5 Summary

To summarize, when it comes to the debate over whether or not content is conceptual and the debate over whether content is narrow or wide, while pure consciousness experiences do not resolve these debates, pure consciousness experiences do introduce certain restrictions. With regard to the debate over whether content is conceptual or nonconceptual, pure consciousness experiences restrict what can count as conceptual. With regard to the debate over whether content is narrow or wide, pure consciousness experiences limit the types of arguments that can be made in favor of the position that all content is wide.

The impact pure consciousness experiences have on the debate over whether phenomenal consciousness can be reduced to the physical depends on the type of representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences one accepts. While a bodily sensations account of pure consciousness experiences (on the assumption that the represented body part is physical) requires a reductionist view of phenomenal consciousness, a mysterious entities account requires a nonreductionist view unless one is willing to accept a very expansive view of the physical. An illusions account of pure consciousness experiences is compatible with both reductionist and nonreductionist views.

Finally, when it comes to the debate over whether representations are pure

or impure, pure consciousness experiences rule out the possibility that all representations are impure. Because pure consciousness experiences are inconsistent with impure representationalism, one can claim that some or most representational experience is impure, but not that all representational experience is impure.

Chapter 7

Can Representationalism Really Account for Pure Consciousness Experiences?

I begin this final chapter by summarizing the ways in which representationalism might successfully account for pure consciousness experiences and the costs and benefits of each of these approaches. I will also discuss which of these representationalist accounts is preferable. I conclude by arguing that we should in fact reject any representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences. Because of this we should also reject representationalism as a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness.

7.1 Review of potentially successful representationalist accounts of pure consciousness experiences

One way of providing a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences is to suggest that pure consciousness experiences represent some sort of mysterious entity. One candidate for such a mysterious entity is sense-data. Under such an account, the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is a representational property of a sense-datum. While such an account requires one to accept the often disliked idea of sense-data, a benefit of this approach is that accepting sense-data allows one to explain how a veridical experience and a hallucination can be phenomenally identical because both represent the same

(type of) sense-data. While the sense-data approach removes the problem of accounting for hallucinations that representationalists tend to face, there are numerous downsides. For one, not only does one have to accept the existence of sense-data, one further has to accept that there can be sense-data (or a sense-datum) that lack any properties other than buzziness, including lacking the properties of spatial dimension and extension in time, or at least appear to lack any additional properties (including the property of appearing to lack properties). Another downside of the sense-data approach is that while representationalism may still claim to explain phenomenal consciousness as nothing more than represented properties of represented objects, this approach requires that one explain sense-data, both what they are and how they are perceived. Further, unless sense-data are found to be part of the physical world, we are left with a nonreductionist account of phenomenal consciousness. Of course, this lack of reduction and need to explain sense-data are not reasons to reject such an account, but they do mean that representationalism by itself is insufficient to adequately explain phenomenal consciousness.[368]

The other candidate (generally speaking) for a mysterious entity is something such as God, Brahman, etc. and on this type of mysterious entities account, it is God or Brahman, etc. that is represented in pure consciousness experiences. As with the sense-data version of a mysterious entities account,

368Some would also include the alleged inability for misrepresentation as a reason to reject sense-data, but, like Alex Byrne (see Byrne, "Intentionalism Defended" at 225) I do not agree that this is a reason to reject sense-data. Briefly, two basic reasons for my position are, one, that sense-data do not necessarily preclude misrepresentation and, two, that allowing for misrepresentation is not actually necessary.

unless one adopts a very expansive definition of the physical, this approach does not allow for a reductionist view of phenomenal consciousness and thus once again representationalism by itself is insufficient to adequately explain phenomenal consciousness. Another downside of this type of mysterious entities approach is that not only does one have to accept and explain the existence of such an entity, one also has to reject the views of traditions and individuals who do accept some such entity because these traditions and individuals generally do not take pure consciousness experiences to be *of* such an entity at all. Rather, such experiences involve some sort of merging with the entity in question such that there is no distinction between the experiencer and the entity and there is neither an object of experience nor a subject undergoing the experience. Thus, this type of mysterious entities account means not only accepting a mysterious entity, but also rejecting views and ontologies that do accept such a mysterious entity.

Another way to provide a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences is via illusions and again there are two ways of doing so. One such way is to take illusions as involving the presence of apparent or illusory properties that the object or objects in question do not actually have. Under this approach, the buzz of pure consciousness experiences is such a property. Given that pure consciousness experiences involve nothing other than a buzz, not only is the buzz an illusory property, but no non-illusory properties of the perceived object or objects are represented in experience. Thus downsides of

this approach include explaining how an object or objects can have the illusory property of a buzz, how this property is perceived, why this property does not seem to be located anywhere, why no other properties, including all non-illusory properties, are perceived, and why such illusions seem to only occur under certain circumstances (i.e., either while one is meditating or after one has consumed certain drugs). While this approach does allow for a reductive account of phenomenal consciousness, which many will consider a benefit, at least some of these downsides are quite significant.

The other way is to take the position that buzziness is an ordinarily perceived (even if not ordinarily noticed) property of an object or objects and that some sort of illusion occurs such that the object or objects lack all other ordinarily perceived properties and this is why pure consciousness experiences consist of nothing more than a buzz. While again consistent with reductionism, there are many downsides to such an approach: One must accept both this idea of illusions and that such illusions can actually occur and also that at least some objects have the property of buzziness and that this property is somehow perceived.

The third option for providing a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences is via a bodily sensations approach in which the represented body part and the experience of the represented body part are one and the same. To accept such an account, one must accept that one can have an experience of part of their own brain (or that phenomenal consciousness is located somewhere other than the brain) and that the part of the brain (or other body part)

in question has the property of buzziness, both of which might be considered downsides of this account. An upside of this account for many is that, given that the experience and represented body part are one and the same, if the represented body part is physical, then the experience is necessarily physical and thus this account is consistent with a purely physicalist account of phenomenal consciousness. Another upside of this account is that, given that the experience and the object represented in experience are one and the same, they are in the same location and thus one can attend to the represented object without being aware of spatial location, which is consistent with pure consciousness experiences lacking any sense of spatial location. However, pure consciousness experiences also lack any sense of space at all and this may be problematic if the represented brain or other body part takes up space, as it likely does.

7.2 Which representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences is preferable?

So which of these representationalist accounts of pure consciousness experiences is to be preferred? The illusions approaches, while they can not be definitively ruled out, are quite unappealing. Not only do they require the absence of all properties of an object except for (the illusory or non-illusory property of) buzziness, they also require the buzziness to lack any sort of spatial location or apparent existence in time. Further, one must explain how the property of buzziness is perceived, which is especially problematic given that it does not seem

to be perceived through any of the traditional sense mechanisms. The numerous problems of the illusions approaches mean that we should probably look elsewhere if we want to provide a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences.

Many may find the bodily sensations account of pure consciousness experiences the most appealing because it allows for a physicalist account of phenomenal consciousness while largely avoiding the problems of the illusions approaches. Of course, there are still problems with the bodily sensations approach, as noted above. There is also another problem that I have not yet mentioned and this problem involves the question of whether the bodily sensations approach is really representational at all. Under the bodily sensations approach, the represented body part and the phenomenal experience are one and the same. Thus we do not have x and a separate representation of x, but rather just x. If we only have x, then it does not seem that we have a representation at all. To have a representation, we have to say that x is a representation of itself, but we do not ordinarily take such a position. For example, take any ordinary table. It is a table, but it is not simultaneously a representation of a table, and especially not a representation of that very same table (i.e., itself); rather, it just is that table. Similarly, I am not both me and a representation of me; rather, I am just me. My hand is not both my hand and a representation of my hand; it is just my hand. My visual experience of a chair, while it may be a representation of the chair, is not also a representation of my visual experience of the chair; rather, it

just is my visual experience of a chair. Thus, if the buzz of pure consciousness experiences just is a certain part of my brain, then it is not also a representation of that part of my brain; rather, it just is that part of my brain.

Further, even if one were to be okay with the idea that everything is both itself and a representation of itself, a problem remains. Even if, say, my visual experience of a chair represents my visual experience of a chair, it still also represents the chair and thus the representation relevant to representationalist theories of phenomenal consciousness is the representing of something else (in this case, the chair) and not the experience's representation of itself. This is because the experience would not include properties of the chair if it did not represent the chair. Thus, for pure consciousness experiences to be representational in the relevant way, they must represent something outside of the experience itself. If the buzz of pure consciousness experiences actually is a part of one's brain, then the part of one's brain *is* the experience and is not something outside of the experience. Thus, even if one accepts the idea that something can be both itself and a representation of itself, the bodily sensations approach is still problematic because, although it involves representation, it does not involve the relevant kind of representation.

This leaves us with the mysterious entities options. The mysterious entities approaches certainly have their downsides as well, including the existence of some sort of thing or things for which we currently seem to have no empirical evidence, somehow perceiving this thing (which likely involves a nontraditional

sense of perception), and this thing having the property of a buzz that has no differentiation or spatial or temporal aspect, including no sense of distinction between oneself and the thing experienced. While, like the illusions approaches, the mysterious entities approaches can not be definitively ruled out, they are not very appealing. However, because whatever mysterious entity is involved is so (as of yet at least) hypothetical, we can at least posit such an entity without running into (or at least not running into to the same extent) some of the problems encountered in the illusions approaches because we do not have to explain how one can perceive the buzziness of an external physical object and how this property of an external physical object can lack any spatial location. We do, however, have to accept similar problems as well as the existence of some such mysterious entity to begin with.

Returning to the question of which representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences is to be preferred, the initially more appealing bodily sensations approach is ruled out because it is not actually representational, or at least not representational in the relevant sense. This leaves us with the illusions and mysterious entities options. While both of these options leave much to be explained, the mysterious entities approach, despite the positing of some sort of mysterious entity, seems preferable because at least it does not involve somehow perceiving an external physical object as not actually being located in time and space. Although the mysterious entities option also involves perceiving (in some sense) some sort of object as not located in time or space, at least, because of the

mysteriousness involved, it allows for explanations that are less restricted by current scientific understanding.

7.3 Are pure consciousness experiences really representational at all?

As has become apparent, none of the possible ways of providing a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences are very enticing. It seems that a mysterious entities account is actually the most preferable option, but it is not particularly desirable, especially for physicalists. Further, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, the mysterious entities approaches leave numerous things unaccounted for which means that even if one accepts such an approach, representationalism itself is not sufficient to explain phenomenal consciousness.

Further, accounting for pure consciousness experiences via representationalism is putting the cart before the horse, so to speak. In doing so, we are accepting a particular theory of consciousness and then trying to force everything into that theory and its (or one of its) framework(s). Instead we should start by considering the diverse types of phenomenal experiences that exist and then develop a theory consistent with these diverse types of experiences. If we consider pure consciousness experiences themselves, they do not seem to be of or about anything. Of course, just because they do not seem to be of or about anything does not mean that they are not actually of or about anything, but as we have seen, attempts to establish what they are of or about have been largely unsuccessful. Although I have been talking about pure consciousness experiences

as if they are of or about a buzz, I have been doing so only to aid representationalism. A better and seemingly more accurate way to understand pure consciousness experiences is to say that even though there is something it is like to undergo such an experience, the experience is not of or about anything. It is a phenomenally conscious experience with no content. It seems, then, that pure consciousness experiences are actually phenomenal consciousness itself.

One might object that if pure consciousness experiences are actually phenomenal consciousness itself, then such experiences should not seem so strange and incomprehensible to phenomenally conscious beings that have never undergone such an experience. If phenomenal consciousness is an independent thing, then anyone that is phenomenally conscious should be able to recognize or pick out phenomenal consciousness itself as distinct from the contents of phenomenally conscious experiences. However, there are several possible reasons that this might not be the case. One possibility is that for some reason when there are contents of experience we can not focus our attention on phenomenal consciousness itself, but rather only on (some of) the contents of experience. Another possibility is that phenomenal consciousness is like a clear piece of glass or plastic and one sees straight through it, unnoticed, to the contents of experience, but when there are no contents of experience one actually notices phenomenal consciousness itself. A third possibility is that phenomenal consciousness itself gets covered up by the contents of experience and thus is not ordinarily noticeable. This would be akin to a wall being entirely covered with a

painting. In such a case, the wall is still there even though it can not be noticed or perceived unless the painting is removed.

7.4 Summary

In sum, not only are attempts to provide a representationalist account of pure consciousness experiences highly problematic, if we start with pure consciousness experiences themselves rather than a representationalist framework, the idea that pure consciousness experiences are representational does not even seriously enter the picture. Also, if we accept the mysterious entities approach to representationalism, which seems to be the least problematic, we need more than just representationalism to explain phenomenal consciousness, at least when it comes to pure consciousness experiences.

Thus, in light of pure consciousness experiences, representationalism is an insufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness. Because pure consciousness experiences are phenomenally conscious and can not be explained in terms of representationalism, we must find another way to explain phenomenal consciousness. Further, in rejecting representationalism as a sufficient theory of phenomenal consciousness, we lose the ability of reductive forms of representationalism to account for phenomenal consciousness in purely physical terms. Therefore, unless we accept an identity theory approach to phenomenal consciousness and say that phenomenal consciousness just is some sort of physical state or occurrence from a first-person perspective, the explanatory gap

that reductive representationalism tried to shield us from returns and we are brought back to the question of what phenomenal consciousness actually is.

Bibliography

Arenander, Alarik T. and Frederick T. Travis (2004) "Brain Patterns of Self-Awareness" in *Self-Awareness Deficits in Psychiatric Patients: Assessment and treatment*, Bernard D. Beltman and Jyotsna Nair, eds. W. W. Norton & Company, 112-128.

Aurobindo, Sri (2005) *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Austin, James H. (2006) *Zen-Brain Reflections*. MIT Press.

Baars, Bernard J. (2005) "Global Workspace Theory of Consciousness: Toward a cognitive neuroscience of human experience." *Progress in Brain Research* 150:45-53.

Baars, Bernard J., Thomas Z. Ramsøy, and Steven Laureys (2003) "Brain, Conscious Experience and the Observing Self." *TRENDS in Neuroscience* 26:671-675.

Baars, Bernard J. (1988) *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press.

Badawi, Kheireddine, Robert Keith Wallace, David Orme-Johnson, and Anne Marie-Rouzere (1984) "Electrophysiologic Characteristics of Respiratory Suspension Periods Occurring During the Practice of the Transcendental Meditation Program." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 46(3):267-276.

Bayne, Tim (2007) "Conscious States and Conscious Creatures: Explanation in the Scientific Study of Consciousness." *Philosophical Perspectives*

21(1):1-22.

Bernhardt, Stephen (1990) "Are Pure Consciousness Events Unmediated?" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press, 220-236.

Bhikkhu, Thanissaro (2012) *Udāna: Exclamations*. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/udana.pdf>.

Bhikkhu, Thanissaro (2004-2013) *Ariyapariyesana Sutta: The Noble Search*. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html>.

Block, Ned (2003) "Mental Paint" in *Reflections and Replies: Essays on the Philosophy of Tyler Burge*, Martin Hahn and Bjorn Ramberg, eds. MIT Press at 165-200.

Block, Ned (1990) "Inverted Earth." *Philosophical Perspectives* 4:53-79.

Brentano, Franz (2009/1874) *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Routledge.

Bryant, Edwin F. (2009) *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*. North Point Press.

Byrne, Alex (2001) "Intentionalism Defended." *The Philosophical Review* 110(2):199-240.

Carruthers, Peter (2004) "HOP over FOR, HOT theory" in *Higher Order Theories of Consciousness*, R. Gennaro, ed. John Benjamins, 115-136.

Carruthers, Peter (2000) *Phenomenal Consciousness: A naturalistic theory.* Cambridge University Press.

Chalmers, David J. (2004) "The Representational Character of Experience" in *The*

Future for Philosophy, Brian Leiter, ed. Oxford University Press, 153-181.

Chalmers, David J. (2004) "How Can We Construct a Science of Consciousness?" in *The Cognitive Neurosciences III*, Michael S. Gazzaniga, ed. MIT Press, 1111-1119.

Chalmers, David J. (1999) "First-Person Methods in the Science of Consciousness." *Consciousness Bulletin*. Center for Consciousness Studies.

Conze, Edward (2007) *Buddhist Texts: Through the Ages*. Philosophical Library.

Conze, Edward (1958) *Buddhist Wisdom Books*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Crane, Tim (2009) "Intentionalism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, Brian P. McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann, and Sven Walter, eds. Clarendon Press, 474-493.

Crane, Tim (2003) "The Intentional Structure of Consciousness" in *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspectives*, Quentin Smith and Aleksandar Jokic, eds. Clarendon Press, 33-56.

Crick, Francis and Christof Koch (1998) "Consciousness and Neuroscience." *Cerebral Cortex* 8:97-107.

d'Aquili, Eugene G. and Andrew B. Newberg (1993) "Religious and Mystical States: A neuropsychological model." *Zygon* 28:177-200.

Dennett, Daniel C. (1991) *Consciousness Explained*. Little, Brown and Company.

Dennett, Daniel C. (1990) "Quining Qualia" in *Mind and Cognition*, William G. Lycan, ed. Blackwell Publishing, 519-548.

Dretske, Fred (1995) *Naturalizing the Mind*. MIT Press.

Edison, Tommy "About Tommy Edison." The Tommy Edison Experience. <http://blindfilmcritic.com/about-tommy-edison>.

Edison, Tommy and Ben Churchill (2012) "Describing Colors to Blind People." The Tommy Edison Experience. <http://blindfilmcritic.com/archives/2771>.

Farrow, John T. and J. Russell Hebert (1982) "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique." *Psychosomatic Medicine* 44(2):133-153.

Fasching, Wolfgang (2008) "Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and Meditation." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7:463-483.

Feuerstein, Georg (1979) *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali: A new translation and commentary*. Dawson.

Flanagan, Owen (2011) *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*. MIT Press.

Fontana, David (2007) "Meditation" in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds. Blackwell Publishing, 154-162.

Fontana, David (2007) "Mystical Experience" in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds. Blackwell Publishing, 163-172.

Forman, Robert K. C. (1999) *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness*. State University of

New York Press.

Forman, Robert K. C., ed. (1998) *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Forman, Robert K. C. (1990) "Eckhart, *Gezücken*, and the Ground of the Soul" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press, 98-120.

Forman, Robert K. C., ed. (1990) *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Forman, Robert K. C. (1986) "Pure Consciousness Events and Mysticism." *Sophia* 25(1):49-58.

Gabbiani, Fabrizo and Steven J. Cox (2010) *Mathematics for Neuroscientists*. Elsevier.

Gennaro, Rocco J. (2008) "Are There Pure Consciousness Events?" in *Revisiting Mysticism*, Chandana Chakrabarti and Gordon Haist, eds. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 100-120.

Griffiths, Paul J. (1990) "Pure Consciousness and Indian Buddhism" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press, 71-97.

Griffiths, Paul J. (1986) *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*. Sri Satguru Publications.

Griffiths, R. R., W. A. Richards, U. McCann, and R. Jesse (2006) "Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained

personal meaning and spiritual significance." *Psychopharmacology* 187:268-283.

Grof, Stanislav (2009) *LSD: Doorway to the Numinous: The Groundbreaking Psychedelic Research into Realms of the Human Unconscious*. Park Street Press.

Gupta, Bina (2003) Cit: *Consciousness*. Oxford University Press.

Gusnard, Debra A. (2005) "Being a Self: Considerations from functional imaging." *Consciousness and Cognition* 14:679-697.

Hariharananda Aranya, Swami and P. N. Mukerij (1983) *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*. State University of New York Press.

Harman, Gilbert (1990) "The Intrinsic Quality of Experience." *Philosophical Perspectives* 4:31-52.

Haugeland, John (1997) "What Is Mind Design?" in *Mind Design II: Philosophy, Psychology, Artificial Intelligence*, John Haugeland, ed. MIT Press, 1-28.

Horgan, Terence E. and John L. Tienson (2002) "The Intentionality of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Intentionality" in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, David J. Chalmers, ed. Oxford University Press, 520-533.

Horner, I. B. (2006) *The Noble Quest: Ariyapariyesana Sutta*. Buddhist Publication Society.

Huemer, Michael (2011) "Sense-Data." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, ed. URL =

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/sense-data.>

Hume, Robert Ernest (1921) *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*. Oxford University Press.

Hurlburt, Russell T. and Eric Schwitzgebel. (2007) *Describing Inner Experience?: Proponent Meets Skeptic*. MIT Press.

I Heart Huckabees (2004) David O. Russell, dir. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

Jackson, Frank (1982) "Epiphenomena Qualia." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 32(127):127-136.

Jacob, Pierre (2010) "Intentionality." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, ed. URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/intentionality/>.

James, William (2002-2013/1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Electronic Classics Series.

James, William (1890) *The Principles of Psychology*. Classics in the History of Psychology. <http://psychclassics,yorku.ca/James/Principles>.

Kasamatsu, Akira and Tomio Harai (1966) "An Electroencephalographic Study on the Zen Meditation (Zazen)." *Folia Psychiatrica et Neurologica Japonica* 20:4, 315-336.

Katz, Steven T. (1978) "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, Steven T. Katz, ed. Oxford University Press, 22-74.

Kolb, Bryan and Ian Q. Whishaw (2008) *Fundamentals of Human Neuropsychology, Sixth Edition*. Worth Publishers.

Lama, Dalai and Daniel Goleman (2003) "On the luminosity of being." *New Scientist* 178:2396, 42-43.

Larsen, Richard J. and Morris L. Marx (2001) *Introduction to Mathematical Statistics and Its Applications, Third Edition*. Prentice Hall.

Lau, Hakwan and David M. Rosenthal (2011) "Empirical Support for Higher-Order Theories of Conscious Awareness." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 15(8):365-373.

Levine, Joseph (2003) "Experience and Representation" in *Consciousness: New Philosophical Perspectives*, Quentin Smith and Aleksandar Jokic, eds. Clarendon Press, 57-76.

Lutz, Antoine, John D. Dunne, and Richard J. Davidson (2007) "Meditation and the Neuroscience of Consciousness: An introduction" in *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, Philip David Zelazo, ed. Cambridge University Press, 499-551.

Lutz, Antoine and Evan Thompson (2003) "Neurophenomenology: Integrating Subjective Experience and Brain Dynamics in the Neuroscience of Consciousness." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10(9-10):31-52.

Lycan, William G. (2008) "Representational Theories of Consciousness." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/

consciousness-representational>.

Lycan, William G. (1998) "In Defense of the Representational Theory of Qualia." *Philosophical Perspectives* 12:479-487.

Lycan, William G. (1996) *Consciousness and Experience*. MIT Press.

Lycan, William G. (1987) *Consciousness*. MIT Press.

MacPherson, Fiona (2006) "Ambiguous Figures and the Content of Experience." *Noûs* 40(1):82-117.

Madhavananda, Swami, trans. (1950) *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas.

Maharishi Foundation USA (2013) <http://www.tm.org/meditation-techniques>.

Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi (1966) *The Science of Being and Art of Living*. International SRM Publications.

Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi (1963) *Science of Being and Art of Living: Transcendental Meditation*. Penguin.

Marcel, Anthony J. (2003) "Introspective Report: Trust, Self-Knowledge and Science." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 10(9-10):167-186.

Matt, Daniel C. (1990) "*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, Robert K. C. Forman, ed. Oxford University Press, 121-159.

McCabe, Oliver LeRoy (1968) *An Empirical Investigation of the Effects of Chemically (LSD-25)-Induced 'Psychedelic Experiences' on Selected Measures of Personality, And Their Implications for Therapeutic*

Counseling Theory and Practice. Doctoral Dissertation, The Catholic University of America.

McDowell, John (1996) *Mind and World*. Harvard University Press.

McGrath, Patricia A. (1990) *Pain in Children: Nature, Assessment, and Treatment*. The Guilford Press.

Morin, Alain (2006) "Levels of Consciousness and Self-Awareness: A comparison and integration of various neurocognitive views." *Consciousness and Cognition* 15:358-371.

Murphy, Michael and Steven Donovan (1997) *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation: A Review of Contemporary Research with a Comprehensive Bibliography 1931-1996*. Institute of Noetic Sciences.

Nagel, Thomas (1974) "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83:435-456.

Nicholson, Reynold A. (1922) *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose*. Cambridge University Press.

Nicholson, Reynold A. (1906) "A Historical enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 303-348.

Niedermeyer, E. and F. H. Lopes da Silva (2005) *Electroencephalography: Basic principles, clinical applications, and related fields*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Olivelle, Patrick (1998) *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*.

Oxford University Press.

Orme-Johnson, David (1989) "Does the Nervous System Have a Ground State? A Description of High EEG Coherence Events in a Single Subject." *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Program: Collected Papers*. International Association for the Advancement of the Science of Creative Intelligence. Vol. 3:1699-1704.

Peacocke, Christopher (1983) *Sense and Content: Experience, Thought, and their Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Prinz, Jesse (2001) “Functionalism, Dualism, and the Neurocorrelates of Consciousness” in *Philosophy and the Neurosciences: A Reader*, William Bechtel, Pete Mandik, Jennifer Mundale, and Robert S. Stufflebeam, eds. Blackwell Publishers, 278-294.

Putnam, Hilary (1975) "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume VII: Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, Keith Gunderson, ed. University of Minnesota Press, 131-193.

Rampil, I. J. (1987) "Elements of EEG signal processing." *International Journal of Clinical Monitoring and Computing* 4:85-98.

Rey, Georges (1998) "A Narrow Representationalist Account of Qualitative Experience." *Philosophical Perspectives* 12:435-457.

Rolt, C. E., trans. (1992) *Dionysius the Areopagite; The Divine Names; and The Mystical Theology*. Kessinger Publishing, LLC.

Rosenthal, David M. (2010) "How to Think about Mental Qualities."

Philosophical Issues 20: 368-393.

Rosenthal, David M. (2005) *Consciousness and Mind*. Clarendon Press.

Rosenthal, David M. (1997) "A Theory of Consciousness" in *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere, eds. MIT Press, 729-753.

Schwitzgebel, Eric (2011) *Perplexities of Consciousness*. MIT Press.

Searle, John R. (1983) *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge University Press.

Severeide, Carl Jacob (1989) "Physiological and Phenomenological Aspects of Transcendental Meditation." *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Program: Collected Papers*. International Association for the Advancement of the Science of Creative Intelligence. Vol. 3:1556-1584.

Shear, Jonathan (2007) "Eastern Methods for Investigating Mind and Consciousness" in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds. Blackwell Publishing, 697-710.

Shear, Jonathan (1983) "The Experience of Pure Consciousness: A new perspective for theories of the self." *Metaphilosophy* 14:53-62.

Siderits, Mark, Evan Thompson, and Dan Zahavi, eds. (2011) *Self, No Self?: Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions.* Oxford University Press.

Siewert, Charles (2011) "Consciousness and Intentionality." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, ed.

URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/consciousness-intentionality/>.

Siewert, Charles (1998) *The Significance of Consciousness*. Princeton University Press.

Sivananda, Sri Swami, trans. (2000) *Bhagavad Gita*. Divine Life Society.

Smith, Margaret (1972) *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*. Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd.

Society for Neuroscience (2008) *Brain Facts: A Primer on the Brain and Nervous System*.

St. Teresa of Avila (1577/2007) *Interior Castle*. E. Allison peers, trans. Dover Publications.

St. Teresa of Avila (2002) *The Complete Works, Volume 1*. E. Allison Peers, trans. Burns and Oates.

St. Teresa of Avila (1960) *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila*. E. Allison Peers, trans. and ed. Image Books.

Stace, W. T. (1961) *Mysticism and Philosophy*. MacMillan & Co. Ltd.

Stace, W. T. (1960) *The Teachings of the Mystics*. The New American Library.

Strong, John S. (2008) *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Third Edition. Thomas Wadsworth.

Thau, Michael (2002) *Consciousness and Cognition*. Oxford University Press.

Toc (2010, September 27) "Re: ideal dosage ?!" Online forum comment. <http://tribes.tribe.net/psilocybin/thread/d9ad6f06-3290-4ed6-b3f8-

f03feb4dc261>.

Toc (2010, September 26) "Re: ideal dosage ?!" Online forum comment. <http://tribes.tribe.net/psilocybin/thread/d9ad6f06-3290-4ed6-b3f8-f03feb4dc261>.

Tononi, Giulio and Gerald M. Edelman (1998) "Consciousness and Complexity." *Science* 282(5395):1846-1851.

Tye, Michael (forthcoming) "What Is the Content of a Hallucinatory Experience?" in Berit Brogaard, ed., *Does Perception Have Content?* Oxford University Press.

Tye, Michael (forthcoming) "The Puzzle of Transparency" in A. Byrne, J. Cohen, G. Rosen, and S. Shiffrin, eds., *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy.* Norton.

Tye, Michael (2009) "The Admissible Contents of Visual Experience." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59(236):541-562.

Tye, Michael (2008) "The Experience of Emotion: An Intentionalist Theory." *Revue internationale de philosophie* 243(1):25-50.

Tye, Michael (2007) "Intentionalism and the Argument from No Common Content." *Noûs* 41(1):589-613.

Tye, Michael (2005) "On the Nonconceptual Content of Experience" in M. E. Reicher and J. C. Marek, eds., *Experience and Analysis: Papers of the 27th International Wittgenstein Symposium*. Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society at 221-239.

Tye, Michael (2002) "Representationalism and the Transparency of Experience." *Noûs* 36(1):137-151.

Tye, Michael (1998) "Precis of *Ten Problems of* Consciousness." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58(3):649-656.

Tye, Michael (1997) "The Problem of Simple Minds: Is There Anything It Is like to Be a Honey Bee?" *Philosophical Studies* 88(3):289-317.

Tye, Michael (1995) *Ten Problems of Consciousness*. MIT Press.

Tye, Michael (1994) "Qualia, Content, and the Inverted Spectrum." *Noûs* 28:159-183.

Tye, Michael (1992) "Visual qualia and visual content" in *The Content of Experience: Essays on Perception*, Tim Crane, ed. Cambridge University Press, 158-176.

Van Gulick, Robert (2011) "Consciousness." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/consciousness/>.

Varela, Francisco J., Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch (1991) *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press.

Velmans, Max and Susan Schneider, eds. (2007) *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*. Blackwell Publishing.

Vollenweider, Franz X. and Mark A. Geyer (2001) "A systems model of altered consciousness: Integrating natural and drug-induced psychoses." *Brain Research Bulletin* 56(5):495-507.

Weiten, Wayne (2010) *Psychology: Themes & Variations, Briefer Version, Eighth Edition*. Wadsworth.

Zahavi, Dan, Thor Grunbaum, and Josef Parnas, eds. (2004) *The Structure and Development of Self-Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. John Benjamins.