PSYCHE

What is Transparency?

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ABSTRACT: Opacity, in Metzinger's sense, is access to processed information *as* processed, while transparency is only access to the *content* of our phenomenal states. I suspect that transparency conflates different notions. First I show that every conscious experience has a "transparent" core (involving intentionality, directedness and assumption of existence, insensitivity to some unconscious process). Anyway, to be sensitive to earlier processing steps does not imply to take the representation "as modeled by our simulator". There are other ways of being sensitive to this processing experience: experience of gaps in perceptive synthesis, experience of incompleteness, queerness of experience, phenomenal incoherence, searching consciousness. Many of them implies only to put in abeyance incoherence or incompleteness (to be laterally aware of a conflict without dealing with it), or even to put this abeyance into abeyance (not to take into account the absence of solution). But if the conflict becomes serious, we revise our assumption, and this requires the assumption that the conflict is about existing things. The self has a peculiar property here. Even when I revise one aspect of my self, I have to presuppose a self, in the sense that I put in abeyance other revisions of this presupposed self. Self is not a simulation, even if we have only this peculiar access to it.

Metzinger, in his very impressive book, defines, first tentatively, « transparency » as the property of a phenomenal state such that only its content properties are introspectively accessible to the subject of experience, and then definitively defines it as a quality of phenomenal experience the degree of which is inversely proportional to the introspective degree of attentional availability of earlier processing stages (pp. 163 and 165). He also says that transparency is a special form of darkness, is synonymous of missing information and implies auto-epistemic closure. Phenomenal transparency involves an implication of the existence of the entities represented. On the contrary, Metzinger defines the opposite of transparency, phenomenal opacity, as implying an access to processed information *as* processed, to our model of the world as a model, and makes us able to represent the distinction between appearance and reality. It is because of transparency that we have difficulty becoming conscious that our representations of the world and ourselves are just models and simulations. In particular, the implicit assumption of the existence of the contents represented is the cause of the deeply entrenched illusion that our self is an existing object, that there are selves in the world. But thanks to opacity, Metzinger has been able to detect this illusion: no such thing as selves exist.

I want to question the two notions of transparency and opacity, as they seem to be ambiguous notions. Transparency appears to combine (or to conflate) at least: (T1) intentionality as being directed towards the object of the representation and not towards the representation (hereafter direct intentionality), (T2) directedness, (T3) assumption of existence, (T4) assumption of plain access to content, (T5) insensitivity to the incompleteness of the content of our cognitive experience, (T6) insensitivity to the processed character of our conscious information, (T7) no attentional access to an earlier processing stage.

Opacity means: (O1) conscious access to an earlier stage of the cognitive processing, (O2) sensitivity to the processed character of our conscious information; but it may also mean: (O3) second-order intentionality, (O4) consciousness of a presentational aspect as such, (O5) side-consciousness of the type of process by which the information is given (vision or touch, for example), (O6) side-consciousness of the incompleteness of our present cognitive content, (O7) consciousness of our incapacity to have access to a content (the name of a person, for example). I will not try to expend these two lists.

In what follows, I want first to show that in each conscious experience, including opaque experiences, there is a "transparent" core (in a restricted sense of "transparent") involving intentionality (T1), directedness (T2) and assumption of existence (T3). Then I will analyse more precisely (T5): what is insensitivity to the incompleteness of the content of our cognitive experience, showing that in a lot of cases we have a side-consciousness of some incompleteness of our present cognitive content (O6). On one hand, even if such states are opaque ones, we can doubt that we have attentional access to earlier stages. Our attitude towards them is not attentional access, but what I will call "abeyance". I will define more precisely its relations with cognitive and perceptive conflicts: simple abeyance is a side-consciousness of a conflict as let unsolved, with no need to solve it, and is cancelled out as soon as a revision solves the conflict. On the other hand, transparent states do not imply total insensitivity to incompleteness. They only

imply abeyance of abeyance, which can be suspended in case of conflict, giving rise to simple abeyance. Double abeyance is only a *potential* sensitivity to incompleteness. Double abeyance and simple abeyance are pervasive in our conscious experience. That leads to the conclusion that "opacity" is too general a notion and that several distinct categories have to be differentiated here: gaps in the synthesis of the different modalities of perception, incompleteness of perception, queerness of experience, incoherence between two conscious contents and side-consciousness of searching processes. The main point is that only the last type of opacity could be possibly considered as a conscious access to an earlier processing stage. As a matter of fact we cannot decide if it is so, or if it is a combination of a side-consciousness of the type of process by which information is given (O5) and a consciousness of our incapacity to have access to some content (O7). From these analyses I will conclude that transparency would be better thought as abeyance of abeyance. We do not have the *illusion* that we see the world through transparent glasses. We only put in double abeyance how dirty and distorting are our glasses – our simulations and models. If the assumption of existence is a common feature of transparency and opacity, if transparency (as double abeyance) can be transmuted in presence of conflicts into simple abeyance and then into the revision process which tries to solve the conflicts, transparency cannot be considered as the root of an illusion, the illusory existence of the self. It would be more justified to say that assuming that selves exist needs either abeyance of abeyance (transparency), or simple abeyance (a kind of opacity). But the crucial fact is that in the case of my self, I cannot completely suspend abeyance, because even when I experience conflicting selves in me, I can't help putting in abeyance the incoherence of the "I" who is experiencing them. In order to try to revise my self – and to try to solve this peculiar conflict- I have to presuppose a self the possible incoherence of which is put at least into simple abeyance. Existence of selves cannot be proved, nor their inexistence.

1. Common features of transparency and opacity

First, one fact can be taken for granted. We have no attentional access to the current cognitive processes that are working at the present time to bring us our present phenomenal content. This is not possible at least because awareness implies a kind of stability of content, while the present processes are still working and are unstable by hypothesis. This is the reason why Metzinger says that opacity cannot involve access to our present processing stage, but only to earlier processing stages. The unavailability of the present processing stage is a common feature of both phenomenal transparent contents and phenomenal opaque ones.

But don't plain transparency and opacity have other common features? Intentionality seems such a feature, if by 'intentionality' we mean: grasping content, and by 'content': the combination of a referent (an object or a state of affairs) and an aspect or a mode of presentation. In addition, such a grasping implies the possibility of a misrepresentation, which implies the capacity to be sensitive to the referent under some aspect, and to be able to discover that it was not the relevant one (this formulation does not pre-empt the discussion about what is the real aspect). Surely opacity implies the possibility of misrepresentation, as, according to Metzinger, it makes us sensitive to the distinction between appearance and reality. But transparent experiences cannot be so

auto-epistemically closed that they exclude misrepresentation. For, if they were so closed, they would not be instances of intentionality.

What is then the meaning of the 'auto-epistemic closure'? It is defined by Metzinger as the epistemic aspect of transparency: "a deficit in the capacity to gain knowledge about oneself" (57). Metzinger tells us that if our phenomenal experience was always and completely transparent, he could not have written his book on "Being no one". The reason is that everyone thinks that he has a phenomenal experience of his self, and that his self exists. If such a belief was auto-epistemically closed, Metzinger could not have access to the very idea of the inexistence of such things as selves.

This is not very convincing. Even if we had no access at all to the earlier stages of our information processing, this processing would be still at work. It could bring forth another conscious content, replacing the previous one. What Metzinger needs in order to get his idea about the inexistence of selves is only to have an unconscious processes working in his brain that bring forth to consciousness the content of "selves are not existent beings", by a kind of popping up, and to have conscious processes that make obvious the contradiction between his previous conscious belief that his self is an existing object, and the present conscious belief that selves are not existing entities. Then he needs to have a process of solving contradiction, and deciding what is the right claim. But this later process of decision needs not to be accessible to his introspection.

Such a Metzingerian ersatz would differ from the real Metzinger, who is conscious that one of his reasons decides in favour of the inexistence of selves, while other reasons are related to his naïve attitude of taking for granted the existence of selves. The real Metzinger is able to be aware of how difficult is the process of decision, and how incomplete and accessible to revision are his reasoning processes as well as his strongly entrenched implicit assumptions. In terms that will be further clarified below, he has been awoken from his double abeyance about the existence or inexistence of selves by this conflict. He became sensitive to the conflict, and revised his assumptions about the existence of selves, but they are still cognitively active, and he cannot do more that taking this remaining conflict as a mark of opacity. The "transparent" Metzinger is not supposed to be able to be aware of that: at each time, a new conscious content replaces the previous one, and the conflict between the two contents is solved, without any access to the ways by which such a decision has been taken. But the transparent Metzinger is not so auto-epistemically closed that he cannot change his mind. Due to the rationality of his inaccessible reasoning and decision processes – a rationality that could be an acquisition of evolution- he can change his mind in a rational but inaccessible way. The auto-epistemic closure of the Meztingerian ersatz is weaker than the concept defined by Metzinger. It only means that one may be conscious of the different and conflicting contents, but not conscious of the very process leading to the elaboration of the solution from an unsolved conflict. The insensitivity to unconscious inference or to other unconscious cognitive processes would then be a common feature of transparent and opaque states.

As soon as auto-epistemic closure has been weakened in such a way, can we still follow Metzinger when he claims that the difference between appearance and reality is an

implication of the ability to have a phenomenally opaque experience (and auto-epistemically openness)? If a phenomenally transparent representation can include an access to the previous phenomenally transparent representations, this conclusion does not seem to hold. The previous transparent representation can be considered as in conflict with our present transparent representation, and as our unconscious process of decision chooses the present representation as the valid one, the previous one becomes a pure appearance. This seems to be the case in experiences of hallucination. First, we experience the hallucinatory content as a perceptive one, then we have another perceptive content, in contradiction with the previous perceptive content, and we decide to take the present content as perception and the previous content as hallucination, as it is in conflict with your basic expectations. Of course we have here to presuppose that the world has not changed between our two experiences. But this is the assumption that we make as long as we have not noticed a movement in the world that could explain the change.

If incoherence with basic expectations is our main clue for deciding to take some experience as illusory and some other as real (at least real by default), this clue is accessible both to a transparent mind and to a mind which can have opaque experiences.

But intentionality and the ability to reject some phenomenal contents as illusory are not the only common features between transparency and opacity. Directedness and the assumption of existence are also common characteristics. Directedness follows from intentionality, in a way. As it is supposed to be a salient feature of transparency, we have just to examine the case of opacity. When we have attentional access to our experience as a product of some processing, we are directed towards this aspect of our experience. For example, we are conscious of the fact that we use a spatial mental imagery in order to solve an arithmetical problem (we put symbols for numbers in columns). Of course, our consciousness is directed towards the spatial image of these numbers.

Better, we are then assuming that such a result of a spatial imagery process exists. We have no access to the spatial imagery process in itself, but its product is taken as existent, and as being the product of a spatial imagery process – this is the aspect under which we grasp the content of our experience. As well as transparent representation, opaque representation implies also an implicit assumption of the existence of the entities that it represents. Of course the status of these entities differs. Transparent representation implies the assumption of the existence of numbers – in our example. Opaque representation implies the assumption of the existence of the result of a process of mental spatial imagery. But in the case of the self such assumption of existence could be crucial, if self is supposed to be some bunch of such mental and bodily processes.

Of course this assumption of the existence of the products of some cognitive (or affective, or motor) process could be considered as a transparent part of the opaque phenomenal representation. And in fact even some of our introspective representations (introspective$_3$ and introspective$_4$ experiences, in Metzinger's vocabulary) have a transparent part in this sense. But we would have to admit that every phenomenal representation has a transparent part, if we restrict the concept of transparency to these three features: directedness, intentionality, and assumption of existence of something,

which can be either an independent thing or the subjective result of a process. Maybe it is too strong a claim, for some representations could be considered as thoroughly opaque.

As (T1) intentionality, (T2) directedness, and (T3) assumption of existence are not specific of transparent versus opaque conscious experiences, it might be better to take the four other supposed features as giving a more accurate idea of what is a transparent experience: (T4) plain access to content, (T5) insensitivity to the incompleteness of the content of our cognitive experience, (T6) insensitivity to the processed character of our conscious information, which maybe implies but is not implied by (T7): no attentional access to an earlier processing stage.

Property (T4) implies property (T5), but not conversely. Are the negation of (T6), and better, the positive counterpart of (T7) - the access to some earlier step of the processing- implied by the negation of (T5) and (T4)? Does the sensitivity to incompleteness (negation of T5 = O6), which implies the negation of the assumption of plain access to content (T4), implies that we are sensitive to the processed character of our conscious information (negation of T6 = O2), or that we have attentional access to some earlier processing steps (negation of T7)? Let us call this question the question of the *incompleteness-access* conjunction. Does our attentional access to an earlier processing step imply that the intentional content of our phenomenal experience is "the content of the representation as modelled by our simulator"? Let us call this question the question of the *access-model* conjunction. There are cases in which neither consequences seem to follow, and in which both questions have a negative answer.

Let us consider first the *access-model* conjunction. For example, in a well known illusion, when I am in a stopped train beside another one which suddenly moves, I first believe that my train is moving in the opposite direction. But when I discover that my train is still stopped, the earlier stage of my phenomenal experience is not taken *as* a wrong *model* of the world. It is phenomenally experienced retrospectively as a strange or even an incoherent situation in which the relative motion of the two trains was difficult to identify. We do not have a phenomenal experience, at least in our introspection₃ (the subconceptual one), of our representation *as* a model, but only of the relations in the world as strange or incoherent. In order to think of this strange experience of the relations in the world as a modelling, we have to shift to introspection₄, and to make a lot of Metzingerian inferences.

Moreover, in order to think of my own representations *as a model* of the world, I do not need to have access to earlier processing stages. I have to elaborate second order representations about the relation between my representations and the world (second order representation is category (O3) of opacity). This is the usual and philosophical way to take representations *as* representations. Not only second order representations (a kind of opacity) do not imply attentional access to earlier processing stage, but conversely access to earlier processing stage do not imply to think of my representations *as* modelling the world, if "as" implies second order representations.

There is also a kind of representation "as" representation that does not require second order representation properly. We can be conscious of what Meinong has called a self-presentational aspect of our experience (our category (O4) of opacity). When we see

a thing, our experience presents itself as seeing it as really perceived, when we imagine a thing we are conscious of it as unreal and imagined, when we remember a thing we are conscious of it as perceived in the past and now present as a memory, etc. Self-presentation could be conceived either as a side-consciousness or as a kind of flavour of our conscious experience. But this kind of consciousness "as" does not imply that we have attentional access to an *earlier* stage of perceptive processing. The "seeing as real" flavour of our conscious experience is experienced as a present one.

The *access-model* question has then a negative answer. Let us turn now to the *incompleteness-access* question.

2. Opacity, incompleteness and abeyance

There are a lot of interesting situations in which we are sensitive to the incompleteness of our representation or experience, without having attentional access to an earlier processing step, so that in these situations the incompleteness-access question has a negative answer. In what follows, I will try to make a typology of the different categories of this sensitivity to incompleteness in a general sense. But as type 2 will be called incompleteness properly, it is more convenient to use the word "opacity" for the general category, even if we have to keep in mind that opacity here is a bit different from Metzinger's concept of opacity.

(1) *Gaps* in our perceptive synthesis. We have perceptive access to an object, but only by one of our senses. Notice that most of the time, we see distant things without touching or smelling or hearing them. We have here a side-consciousness of the type of perceptive process by which the information is given (O5), a bit different from the side-consciousness of the presentational aspect that we have just mentioned. The difference is that in addition to this presentational aspect –that we are positively seeing the thing- we have a way to deal with the absence of the another possible mode of presentation (hearing, touching, smelling). But the absence of such other sensorial information is not experienced as a zero smelling, zero touching, zero hearing, but only as what we could call possible smelling, touching, hearing; or it could be better called smelling, touching and hearing *in abeyance* (double abeyance as we will see). It is a bit different for tasting, as we usually restrict tasting to some kind of objects. When we taste a thing, we cannot see all its parts, as it is partly in our mouth. Then seeing is in abeyance in its turn.

Most of the time, abeyance is not a salient feature of our phenomenal experience. Usually *abeyance is itself in abeyance*. We do not pay attention to the fact that we do not smell, touch or hear a distant thing. But it is nevertheless a constitutive part of our experience. When we suddenly smell or hear something, we do not have to change our identification of the previously seen things, we just have to identify which of them is the one which smells or makes a noise. The previous absence of smelling or noise was not a negation of the potentiality of things to smell or to make noise. This potentiality was in abeyance and this abeyance was itself in abeyance: we did not put it in the focus of our experience.

"To be in abeyance" is a very weak kind of negation. Something that is in abeyance, in the sense that is given here to this term, is neither negated nor absent. The

value of an aspect of an object which is in abeyance consists in being able to be shifted to the positive, the negative value, or even the neutral value (but not to the absence value, as to be in abeyance is not to be absent). If something is in abeyance, this very abeyance is in most of the cases itself in abeyance. As is now obvious, to have its abeyance in abeyance does not mean to have a positive, neutral or negative value. Double abeyance does not behave as classical double negation. The same is true for absence: absence of absence is not presence. Remember that intuitionists do not admit that double negation is equivalent to affirmation. For them, we can introduce negation and append it to a formula only when a deduction has shown that this formula leads to absurdity, giving opposite value to the same formula. Now if we accept in addition the rule of proof by contradiction, from the absurdity of the deduction which starts from a negated formula, we can allow ourselves to eliminate the negation of the formula.

Let us take conflict as playing for abeyance a role analogous to the one that a deduction leading to absurdity plays for intuitionist negation. As soon as there is such a conflict, the abeyance of abeyance is cancelled out. This still does not give a value to the feature in abeyance. In order to do so, the conflict has to be solved. But it may not be solved, and then we leave the feature in simple abeyance, without this abeyance being itself in abeyance. If the conflict leads to revision, the conflict is solved, some part of the content in abeyance will be negated, and simple abeyance will be itself cancelled out. Therefore abeyance corresponds to a structure which implies a step away from negation. The elimination and introduction rules seem to be symmetrical to intuitionist rules for negation and double negation. Instead of starting from a positive formula, we start from double abeyance. Instead of at the same time introducing and *eliminating* double negation by the proof by contradiction when a simple negation appended to a formula leads to an absurdity, we eliminate double abeyance and *introduce* a simple abeyance when a conflict occurs which questions double abeyance. Instead of *introducing* simple negation when a positive formula leads to an absurdity, we *eliminate* simple abeyance in order to solve a conflict when it is extended and becomes a thread for the success of our pragmatic activities. The *elimination* of abeyance leads to the revision of the content in abeyance, and a successful revision implies the *introduction* of negation. Double abeyance holds again when conflicts have been solved and activities are successful for a while, without any need of revising our expectations. In the same way than positivity (absence of negation) is the option by default for a formula, double abeyance is the option by default when previous conflicts have been solved by revision or by changing our activity, and when there is no present conflict for our consciousness.

One reason for this partial symmetry with the intuitionist negation could be the following. Proof by contradiction starts from the negation of p, then leads to the absurdity: "not p and p", and eliminates the double negation, coming back to p. "Not p and p" is a typical conflict. Simple abeyance consists in being aware of the conflict. But as the conflict does not prevent our current activity to be successful, we let the conflict unsolved. Therefore simple abeyance consists precisely in refusing to introduce double negation while eliminating it at the same time and reducing it to the affirmation of p. What abeyance puts in abeyance is in fact the solution of the conflict by a double negation. This explains why conflict introduces at first abeyance, as an absence of solution to the conflict. In the same way, double abeyance is introduced not by an absence of abeyance, but by an absence of conflict.

If we try to put these notions on a bipolar scale, affirmation is the stronger positive notion, double abeyance is weaker; our neutral state could be then intuitionist double negation as irreducible to affirmation; on the negative part, we would have first abeyance, then eventually negation. Abeyance is a weaker unary operator than negation. Double abeyance is symmetrically a weaker operator than affirmation, but maybe stronger than irreducible double negation.

The conclusion of this logical digression is as follows: most of the time we are not conscious of abeyance, because abeyance of abeyance is the normal state. We can sometimes become conscious of it, if a conflict occurs in our perception. This implies that double abeyance is eliminated and gives rise to the introduction of simple abeyance.

Our first example (seeing things that are not touched and smelled, but that could be so) was in fact an example of double abeyance. Take another example. We hear a distant noise, and we see a man hitting a stake that could be *prima facie* the source of the noise but we see the movement a few seconds before we hear the noise. Thus, there is a conflict and we can't help eliminating the double abeyance and introducing simple abeyance. As long as we take the hitting man as the source of the noise, we let the conflict unsolved and keep our state of abeyance. If we revise our identification of the source – there is another man hitting another stake that we had not noticed but who was closer than the previous one- the conflict is solved and the abeyance is cancelled out.

In the same way, consider the case when we are eating a fruit that it supposed to be sweet, and have put it into our mouth without having a careful look at it. A part of it suddenly feels bitter, and we are eager to see how this part looks like. But we have no precise idea of what is the location of this bitter part in the fruit. There is a conflict between our desire to locate the bitter part and the impossibility to do this in a precise way while tasting the fruit in our mouth. Then we become conscious of our power of localization as in abeyance, and discover that tasting is not localizing. This is not a consciousness of a simple absence of seeing, but a conflict. It results from the desire to locate the bitter part while the fruit is in our mouth and examined by our taste faculty, and the incapability of this faculty to locate this part without the information that is usually already given by vision. But it is not taken as a serious conflict that has to be solved by revision. It is experienced as a gap and as simple abeyance.

(2) *Incompleteness*. A different kind of experience is the experience of an incomplete perception as such. This kind of experience falls in category (O6) of opacity. For example, we are walking very fast in a forest. The trees on our two sides are seen as apparently passing by us as we move. As we keep focusing at some distance and in front of us, what we are seeing in our fovea is kept stable, but we can't help seeing apparent movements in our peripheral visual field. If we want to keep on walking fast, we cannot seriously take into account these apparent movements (they are just used to give us the speed of our walk). But they are in conflict with the static appearance of the trees that are in front of us, in the direction of our walk. Usually we put apparent movements (that we see when we move our head) in double abeyance. But here this double abeyance of apparent movements is cancelled out by the conflict, and simple abeyance is introduced. If we keep on walking, we do not bother with these apparent moves; we keep those

moves in simple abeyance. But while we are walking on the path in the forest, we can also pay attention to this peripheral part of our vision field while keeping the path in our fovea. Paying attention leads usually to revision of incoherent phenomena. But in vision this revision is mainly possible for things seen in our fovea. If we keep apparent movements in our peripheral visual field, revision cannot be achieved. If attention triggers revision, simple abeyance is cancelled. If revision cannot be achieved, the conscious experience of this peripheral part is not a consciousness of a revised but fully filled content, but a consciousness of an *incomplete* content. By contrast, illusions like seeing a movement in a succession of lights placed near each another on a line require that uncompleted perceptions are kept under double abeyance.

Notice that experience of simple abeyance in gaps (an example of category O5) is not sufficient to give us access to earlier processing stages (category O1). And as long as we put apparent side-movements of trees in abeyance, we do not have such access. Sensitivity to incompleteness in a general sense, that is limited to the consciousness of simple abeyance, does not imply conscious access to an earlier stage of our cognitive processes.

You could think that cancellation of simple abeyance and experience of incompleteness (an example of category O6) gives us such an access, at least in our example. The apparently moving trees can be considered as the result of an uncompleted processing, which could count for an earlier stage. But as a matter of fact, the experience of incompleness is not phenomenally taken as an access to an earlier stage of our processing of information. It is just taken as a present incomplete and unstable representation of stable things, in parallel with the things that are stable in our fovea.

We have now to make distinctions between several kinds of experience that could be considered *prima facie* as candidates for this kind of attentional access to earlier stages. In addition to the two kinds that we have just presented, we have to distinguish at least three other kinds of experience: experience of queer changes in our usual abilities; experience of incoherence; experience of ongoing and uncompleted cognitive activity.

(3) Dreams and some kind of hallucinations give us examples of our third kind of opacity: *queerness* of experience. It is also a sub-category of (O6). Queerness is specific to situations in which actions that where usually possible without problems become impossible, or conversely. We are usually able to grasp things, but unable to grasp things that are present in hallucinations. In dreams, we are unable to identify persons, or to reach goals that are usually in the scope of our powers. Objects cannot be moved in the usual way. Or on the contrary, we can make impossible moves, like flying, being in the next instant in a very distant place. Hallucinations are transparent, but their queerness can be conscious. Queerness of hallucination can be either under double abeyance, or, most of the time, in simple abeyance. But it can also appear phenomenally as queerness: things are here, but we cannot achieve our usual moves to grasp them. Queerness of dreams does not seem to be under double abeyance, but under simple abeyance. In dreams, we are sensitive to the queerness of our practices but not to incompleteness of our perception.

(4) Our fourth kind of opacity is phenomenal *incoherence* between two phases of our experience (here again, it is a sub-category of O6). We have already seen that this is the case during the transition from hallucination to perception. But leaving aside hallucinations, we frequently have to revise our perceptive categorizations. We see a rapid move or a flash of light on our peripheral field, but when we turn towards the place of the supposed move or light, there is no such thing or event. We see an animal in a remote place, but it turns out to be a rock or a bush. Or we experience the illusion of the train (our train is first felt as starting, then at the end the other one is seen as moving). Consciousness of incoherence implies that we are no longer under double abeyance. The very transition between illusion and correct perception implies first simple abeyance, as long as we do not try to solve the conflict. When revision is at work, simple abeyance has to be suspended. But plain incompleteness can be experienced if incoherence lasts and resists to revision. This kind of situation has to be distinguished from perceptive illusions like the barber pole or other unstable perceptions which can be perceived as incomplete. An example of lasting incoherence would be our incapability to put perceptively together the movement of the man who is hitting the stake 600 meters away and the noise that we hear 2 seconds later.

Neglect seems a case in which what would be taken by a normal subject as incoherence between two spheres of experience is still kept under double abeyance. The subject drawing a flower while fixing its centre draws a bigger half flower on the neglected side, but does not see the incoherence as long as he is fixing the centre. Phantom limbs, by contrast, imply a combination of the simple abeyance of the inexistence of the limb and a lasting incoherence. The person with a phantom limb can't help feeling the pain as in his limb, but at the same time the inexistence of his limb is not under double abeyance. He cannot cancel out his pain, and that implies an abeyance of the inexistence of the limb, but he also feels it as incoherent with the absence of his limb. In this kind of cases, the conscious experience involves two conflicting phenomena: the abeyance of the inexistence of the limb, which is forced by the felt pain, and the experience of incoherence, which is forced by the revision that concludes to the inexistence of the limb, a revision that presupposes that abeyance has to be given up.

To summarize, incompleteness (O6) does not necessarily implies access to an earlier stage of processing (O1); incompleteness can be taken either as such an access, or as a non-improvable present stage of consciousness. Queerness is not taken as an access to an earlier stage. Incoherence can be taken not as such an access, but only as a hint that there is some process working (badly) under our phenomenal experience. But at the phenomenal level, we do not experience this as more than a hint, that is, as an experience of incompleteness, and not as an experience of access to an earlier stage of processing.

(5) But another kind of opaque consciousness, *searching consciousness,* is much closer to the notion of such an access. When engaged in a cognitive activity which implies some searching, we may have a side-consciousness of the difficulties that we encounter. Here we are in category (O7) of opacity. For example, we try to remember a

name, we have in mind a global sound, or we remember (often wrongly) the first letter of the name, but we cannot remember the name, and we are conscious that we are searching. But we are not conscious of the specific process by which we are searching. Or we are speaking, and at the same time trying to find what part we have planned to give to the argument that our present sentence is expressing, in order to be coherent with this part in our following sentence. In this situation, while we are finishing our present sentence, we are looking for what was our plan or argumentation. We remember some words, and we try to use them as clues for the conceptual links in our previous thoughts. Or we are looking for the word that fits the syntactical and semantical roles implied by the beginning of our sentence and its overall meaning.

Surely these situations are examples of phenomenal opacity. Are these side-consciousness cases just combinations of a side-consciousness of the type of information processing and of awareness of the current failure of our search, or are they examples of real attentional access to earlier stages of processing? This is an undecidable issue. Obviously we refer to earlier stages: the awareness of the first letter of the name, of our previous plan of argumentation, of words that can be taken as clues for that plan, of previous words and grammatical constraints on the end of our sentence. But it is difficult to claim that we have access to earlier processing stages. When we will find the name, the role of the argument in our plan, the word that will successfully end our sentence, will our consciousness be a different kind of consciousness, an achieved consciousness? This would be needed in order to make the difference between a consciousness of an earlier stage, and the consciousness of a final stage. But then there is a dilemma. Either we experience the kind of consciousness of an earlier stage and have an uncompleted consciousness. And this is not a plain consciousness of an earlier stage. Or we experience an achieved consciousness of an earlier stage. But how could an achieved consciousness have access to an uncompleted one as such? We can escape the dilemma if we admit that there is no achieved consciousness, but only consciousness that puts in double abeyance its incompleteness, or introduces abeyance in case of conflict, or give up abeyance for revision. Then, consciousness of earlier stage is for example consciousness of content in abeyance. But this is not an earlier stage properly. It is on the contrary a more elaborated stage, as double abeyance has to have been given up. Our only way to have access to an earlier stage is to make operations (cancellation of double abeyance or even of simple abeyance) that carry us in a very later stage. As Dennett would say, our present consciousness is never the final editing, but it can no longer be the earlier draft, because it is the result of an additional processing. Our supposedly stable and achieved consciousness is only the effect of a kind of soft neglect: abeyance of abeyance. Transparency is only double opacity. Searching consciousness is not a plain access to an earlier stage, but an indirect relation between cancellations of transparency and the supposed earlier stage. Our detailed inquiry has shown that none of the six other categories of opacity implies category (O1), attentional access to an earlier processing stage.

3. Abeyance, revision and the assumption of existence

If transparency is only abeyance of abeyance, it can be eliminated for simple abeyance. An unsolved conflict between at least two parallel flows of information processing may become salient. Then transparency cannot be a perceptual illusion, as even in the transparent state of consciousness, we remain sensitive to the growth of conflicts. Transparency is confidence in the pragmatic fitness of our information processing to our environment and our internal states, but confidence by default, as long as a conflict does not occur in this processing and triggers a demand for revision. In this perspective, the assumption of existence that belongs to the set of features of transparency is not an unfortunate tendency that puts obstacles to serious investigation, a hindrance that we would better get rid of. It is the assumption that makes the conflict more salient and important. If our cognitive conflicts were only conflicts between two simulations, we would have the choice either to let them apart and keep on with other information, or to decide at random between the two simulations. There is no possible conflict between a simulation *as* simulation and a supposed reality, nor between a simulation *as* simulation and another simulation *as* (another) simulation. To be sensitive to the representations that are the result of our cognitive processes *as* simulations or models of the world would not be sufficient to be awoken from the sleep of abeyance. On the contrary, if conflict has something to do with existing things, either one of the simulation has to be taken as reality and the other as illusion, or the two simulations have to be revised. If our modelling of the world is bounded by the assumption of existence, a conflict compels us to revise our representations in order to adapt them in a better way to existing things. And this capacity to revise our representations is what gives us the possibility to make the difference between appearance and reality. On the contrary, if we had access to earlier processing stages, but no assumption of existence, we wouldn't be able to take a conflict between an earlier processing stage and the present one as an evidence either that some revision has been done between the two stages, or that the earlier stage was precisely an earlier and uncompleted stage. If we did not assume that the content of one of the two stages is a better approximation of what exists, we would take the different stages as different models or simulations which have each the same entitlements to be cognitive models; it would be difficult to assign some priority to one of them. Metzinger seems to think that our capacity to have an experience of phenomenal opacity make us able to be awoken from the insensitivity proper to transparency. Opacity only consists in being able of an attentional access to the earlier stages of our cognitive processing (taken as simulation). Being able to have an access to earlier simulations as preparatory steps for our present consciousness only makes us able to relate present simulation to past and uncompleted simulations. This cannot be the required capacity for making the difference between appearance and a more justified content. In order to be awoken from abeyance and transparency, we have to be sensitive to simulations as in conflict with reality.

The assumption that our representations are about existing things (either external things or internal results of processing) makes us able to revise our representations. But we cannot revise all the time and we need a state in which we do not bother with revision,

while standing in a silent watch, silent as long as no real conflict alerts us. This requires distinguishing conflict and incompleteness. We cannot but accept incompleteness (or opacity in its various forms), which is the characteristic of all our representations. Transparency is a way to admit incompleteness: to put it in abeyance. As long as my cognitive glasses are not too dirty and distorting for my purposes, I put this abeyance of dirtiness (our metaphor for incompleteness) in abeyance. When my glasses are dirty, I see some things in a fuzzy way, but I will neither say that the mode of existence of these things is fuzzy, nor that my visual processing is conflicting. I will just take it as incomplete and fuzzy. I will not try to revise my fuzzy representations (I will not try to contradict them) but only to add more specific information to them. If I want to be able to add new information to my belief base, I must avoid revising all the time.

But on the other hand, I need to be awoken from my silent watch, from abeyance of abeyance, if a real conflict occurs. The assumption of existence that is implicit to transparency makes us able to take as the real alarm that we need in order to be awoken, the conflicts that matter for the question of what really exists. Transparency as double abeyance makes us able both to capture new information at the price of putting incompleteness in double abeyance and to revise our information when a conflict suspends this double abeyance.

What are the consequences of this analysis of transparency as double abeyance for the main thesis of Metzinger's book: "there exist no such things as selves"? Surely, my access to the bunch of processes that I call my "self" is an incomplete one. But the assumption of existence is still at work here. At the same time, the incompleteness of my self is put in abeyance. And when I am referring to "I", "me", and in general to my self, I put this abeyance in abeyance. But in the case of myself, is it possible that a conflict awakes me from the sleep of abeyance? Surely there are conflicts that awake me from double abeyance, when I have different and conflicting desires or beliefs. To have then to decide is to have to tell what are my desires and my beliefs at the present time. But can we go through the whole path from double abeyance to simple abeyance and then to revision? Surely we can partly revise the content of our self. But while we are revising it, we have to presuppose a self – the one which is revising- the possible incoherence of which is put in abeyance. Abeyance means here that while specific conflicts are triggering revision, other ones are admitted to be in abeyance. The only conflicts that seem to be both relevant and sufficiently strong for undermining this simple abeyance are considered as mental diseases: multiple personality, schizophrenia and the like. In these cases, patients are not able to revise their incoherent personalities in order to restore coherence. But nevertheless they are able to put these incoherencies in simple abeyance in order for them, as subjects of their practical tasks and as subjects who are speaking of their diseases, to have the required level of coherence. But they are supposed coherent only inasmuch as their possible incoherence is for these very activities under abeyance of abeyance.

To get rid of the simple abeyance that lets me at least partly insensitive to the incompleteness of the supposed content of my self does not seem to be possible. On the contrary, my self is an entity to which there is no access except by abeyance. Instead of saying that such entities do not exist, I would prefer to say that their mode of existence

implies abeyance. As abeyance seems to be a possibility only for cognitive systems, cognitive selves seem to presuppose themselves, and to require this very situation as a condition of existence. If you do not accept existence but for entities free from such a presupposition (let call this status free existence) then selves do not freely exist. But to be dependent on a presupposition does not imply that you do not exist (nor that you exist). It would be better to say that, for entities which are not free from such a presupposition, free existence cannot be proved (but can it be proved for anything?) because they cannot be proved to exist in a stronger sense than their own sense. Neither can they prove their free inexistence, because this very last proof would require the activity of such things as selves.