

PEACOCKE ON RED AND RED'

**ABSTRACT.** How are we to define 'red'? We seem to face a dilemma. For it seems that we must define 'red' in terms of 'looks red'. But 'looks red' is semantically complex. We must therefore define 'looks red' in terms of 'red'. Can we avoid this dilemma? Christopher Peacocke thinks we can. He claims that we can define the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'; the concept of a sensational property of visual experience. Peacocke agrees that his definition of red makes use of a concept that those who possess the concept of being red need not possess; namely, red'. But he thinks that this does not matter. For, he says, the definition is justified provided we can specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. What he tries to show is that this might be so even if no-one could possess the concept of being red' unless he possessed the concept of being red. Peacocke has two attempts at showing this. However, both these attempts fail. What Peacocke does show is something weaker. He shows that, using red', we can construct a concept that gives what he calls the 'constitutive role' of the concept of being red; but, importantly, that it gives the constitutive role of red does not suffice for what Peacocke says is required for giving a definition. Thus, if we accept Peacocke's standard for definition, it follows that he gives us no way of avoiding the original dilemma. If this is right then perhaps we should join with those like Colin McGinn who think that we should give up our attempts to define our secondary quality concepts.

1.

What is the relationship between the concepts of being red and looking red with regard to questions of definitional priority?

On the one hand, we want to say that grasp of what it is for an object to be red has special links with the capacity for visual experience. For, by contrast with the relationship between being square and looking square, it seems to be a necessary truth that one could not possess the concept of being red without knowing what it is like for an object to *look red*. So, it would seem, the concept of looking red must be the fundamental notion. On the other hand, the expression 'looks red' is complex, and contains the semantically significant constituent 'red'. Understanding the complex expression thus requires both an understanding of what it is for an object to *look* some way, and an understanding of what it is for an object to *be red*. So it would seem that the concept of being red must be fundamental.

With regard to questions of definitional priority, then, we appear to be in a dilemma.

Colin McGinn suggests that the way to escape this dilemma is to give up the idea that we can define our secondary quality concepts. He suggests that we should rest content with the claim that 'x is red iff x looks red to normal perceivers under standard conditions' expresses a logical or conceptual equivalence. This, he claims, would suffice to distinguish the relationship between being red and looking red from that between being square and looking square.<sup>1</sup> However, according to certain arguments that Christopher Peacocke has recently put forward, this response is unduly pessimistic. According to Peacocke, we can avoid this dilemma while still giving a definition of the concept of being red in experiential terms provided that we distinguish between two different sorts of intrinsic property that an experience as of a red object may have. The representational property we specify in terms of the concept of looking red is, he claims, only one such property.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I want to discuss Peacocke's attempt to define the concept of being red at some length. For, despite his ingenuity in defending it, I remain unconvinced that Peacocke adequately protects his definition from an objection to it which he himself suggests. It seems to me that we must therefore reject his definition. But once we do so, it follows that Peacocke offers us no way of avoiding the dilemma. This forces us to accept with McGinn that we should abandon our attempts at giving *definitions* of secondary quality concepts.

## 2.

Let me begin by outlining Peacocke's general strategy. He claims that we need to distinguish between two different sorts of intrinsic property possessed by the experience one has when confronted by a red object under standard conditions. On the one hand, it has the *representational* property of being as of a red object. On the other, it has the *sensational* property of being red' in the region of the visual field in which the object is presented.<sup>3</sup> Though the representational property concept, being as of a red object, must be defined in terms of the concept of being red, Peacocke claims that the sensational property concept, being red', cannot be. Rather we *fix the referent* of the

concept of being red' in terms of the description 'the sensational property standardly possessed by the region of the visual field in which a red object is presented in normal humans' (SC p. 21, CCCE p. 375). Importantly, Peacocke claims, we do not thereby give its meaning. The concept of being red' is thus fundamental.

Working with the tripartite distinction between being red, being red' and looking red, Peacocke then suggests that we can define 'x is red' as:

... x is disposed in normal circumstances to cause the region of the visual field in which it is presented to be red' in normal humans. (SC p. 39; CCCE p. 375)

According to Peacocke, such a definition of red in terms of red' allows us to avoid the dilemma. For it both allows us to specify the kind of specifically visual experience required for definition of the concept of being red, and allows us to do so without specifying that kind in terms of the concept of being red.

Now, however appealing this strategy may appear at first sight, it must meet the following intuitive objection. Peacocke claims to have given us a definition of the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. But the concept of being red' is a concept that those who possess the concept of being red may not possess, for it is a concept whose possession would require possession of the sophisticated concepts of a *sensational property* and of the *visual field*. But how could a concept *A* require for its definition a concept *B* that those who possess concept *A* need not possess? Isn't an exercise of concept *A*, if it requires for its definition concept *B*, eo ipso an exercise of concept *B*? Isn't an exercise of a concept just an exercise of its definition in thought?<sup>4</sup>

This intuitive objection is grounded in a quite legitimate concern. For suppose we accept, as I think we should, that the kind of experience had when objects look red can be specified in terms of the sensational property concept of being red'. It then follows that the concepts of being red and being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field in normal humans under standard conditions are necessarily co-extensive. But the fact that two concepts are necessarily co-extensive does not by itself justify the claim that the concepts are related as concept and definition. Otherwise we should hold, what is surely false, that 'water' means 'H<sub>2</sub>O'. Thus concepts are related as concept and definition only if they satisfy some further

condition as well. But what condition? When we reflect on standard cases of definition, such as the definition of 'bachelor' as 'unmarried man', we might plausibly think that what makes a definition of a concept a definition is the fact that the concept defined is the *same concept* as the concepts which give its definition: that it is somehow a construction out of the defining concepts. The criterion for sameness of concepts that we invoke here is one which we can derive from Frege's criterion for sameness of thoughts. For Frege held that thoughts are the same if and only if they have the same cognitive significance.<sup>5</sup> This criterion seems naturally to extend to concepts: concepts are the same if and only if they have the same cognitive significance. Plausibly then, we might say that this is the relationship that must hold between a concept and the concepts employed in giving the definition of that concept. But sameness of cognitive significance is established in part precisely by comparing the conceptual sophistication of one who possesses the concept with the conceptual sophistication of one who possesses the concepts employed in the putative definition of that concept. Thus, it counts in favour of the idea that 'bachelor' means 'unmarried man' that one who possesses the concept of bachelor cannot fail to possess the concepts of being unmarried and of being a man. And it counts against the idea that 'water' means ' $H_2O$ ' that someone who has the concept of water need not possess the concepts of hydrogen and oxygen. However, since Peacocke does not think that it counts against the idea that ' $x$  is red' means ' $x$  is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions' that one who possesses the concept of being red need not possess the concept of being red', he must reject *sameness of cognitive significance* as the further condition that must be met by a pair of concepts which are related as concept and definition. But in that case he needs to explain what other further condition could, if met, justify the claim that a pair of necessarily co-extensive concepts are related as concept and definition. What exactly is the relevant difference between, on the one hand, being red and being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions, and, on the other, being water and being  $H_2O$ ?<sup>6</sup>

Peacocke is sensitive to this objection. He tries to meet it by first characterising the two different kinds of priority at issue. He suggests that concept *A* is *definitionally prior* to concept *B* if we can specify "what it is to have" concept *B* in terms of concept *A* (SC p. 30,

CCCE p. 367), whereas concept *A* is *cognitively prior* to concept *B* if one must possess concept *A* in order to possess concept *B* (SC p. 42, CCCE p. 377). Since our characterisations of definitional and cognitive priority are different, Peacocke insists that we do not assume that definitional and cognitive priority must coincide. Thus, he claims, there would be no tension in holding that the concept of being red' is definitionally prior to the concept of being red while holding that the concept of being red is cognitively prior to the concept of being red'.

However, in order to make this seem plausible, Peacocke needs to do more than to distinguish between kinds of priority. He needs to show that they can come apart in the way that he suggests. In other words, he needs to explain how we can specify in terms of concept *A* what it is to possess concept *B* if we do not, *inter alia*, require possession of concept *A* for possession of concept *B*. Unfortunately, Peacocke fails to make it clear that the plausibility of his definition turns on his providing an adequate explanation of this. Nonetheless we can find in his work an attempt to provide such an explanation. In fact, he seems to attempt two quite different sorts of explanation. However, I shall argue, neither provides him with the explanation that he requires.

### 3.

We find Peacocke's first attempt at explaining how we might specify in terms of the concept of being red' what it is to possess the concept of being red in his account of mastery of the concept of being red:

[We]... can say that when a normal human sees a red object in daylight, there is a property possessed by the region of his visual field in which that object is presented to him. This is the property we labelled "red"... and the crucial feature is that red' is a *sensational* property of experience. It is true we picked out the property by using the ordinary notion of redness; but it does not follow that someone could not manifest a sensitivity to the red'ness of his experience without already possessing the concept of redness.... [We]... may now say this: in mastering a predicate 'red' of objects, one comes to be disposed to apply it to an object when the region of one's visual field in which it is presented is red' and circumstances are apparently normal (or when one has evidence that it would meet this condition were it so presented). (SC pp. 37-8)<sup>7</sup>

The crucial point here is that one can have experiences with the sensational property of being red' without having the concept of being red. Peacocke's idea seems to be that we can exploit this in giving an account of mastery of the concept of being red. For he seems to think

that mastery could be *constituted* by a sensitivity to red' experiences.<sup>8</sup> As he puts it a little later:

*All the experientialist requires for possession of the concept of redness is a certain pattern of sensitivity in the subjects' judgements to the occurrence of red' experiences. (SC p. 38; CCCE p. 374, emphasis is mine)*

If Peacocke were right that we can in this way reduce mastery of the concept of being red to a sensitivity to red' experiences, then he would have succeeded in specifying what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red' without requiring possession of the concept of being red' for possession of the concept of being red. For such a sensitivity may be possessed without possessing the concept of being red'.

However, the account of mastery in terms of a sensitivity to red' experiences that Peacocke actually gives is simply unacceptable. The reason is this.<sup>9</sup> A direct sensitivity of one's judgements to the red'ness of one's experiences under standard conditions would certainly show how, without possessing the concept of being red', one was able to make judgements which reflected that one was confronted by red objects when one was confronted by such objects under such conditions. However, it isn't the case that one whose capacity to use the word 'red' is exhausted by his disposition to make such judgements does have mastery of the concept of being red. One who possesses the concept of being red has mastery of a concept of a property that may be had by objects encountered in non-standard conditions, and by objects that are unperceived. He thus has mastery of a concept that he could apply to an unseen tomato, say. But one whose disposition to apply the word 'red' is constituted by a disposition to make certain judgements when he *actually has* red' experiences, under standard conditions, could not apply the word 'red' to an unseen tomato. Thus, though a direct sensitivity to red' experiences may be thought to suffice for mastery of a concept that one could have without having the concept of being red' – the (unstructured) concept of being seenred, perhaps, a concept applicable only to seen objects – a direct sensitivity to red' experiences clearly cannot be thought to suffice for mastery of the concept of being red.<sup>10</sup>

Can we improve upon this account? Well, as we have seen, mastery of the concept of being red requires, in speakers of English, a

disposition to apply 'red' to both seen objects under standard and non-standard conditions, and to unseen objects. Given that someone's disposition to apply 'red' to seen objects under standard conditions may be explained by a direct sensitivity of his judgements to the red'ness of the experiences he actually has under such conditions, we must ask whether we could explain his disposition to apply 'red' to unseen objects, and to seen objects under non-standard conditions, in terms of a direct sensitivity of his judgements to red' experiences. The question that needs to be answered is, 'To which red' experiences?' For the crucial feature of these cases is that no such experience is actually had.

Here are some suggestions. Might he be sensitive to the red' experiences of others? Clearly not. For it need not be supposed that an object has ever been seen by another in order intelligibly to apply 'red' to it, much less that others are actually perceiving it and that his judgement is sensitive to their doing so. A version of the same objection applies to the suggestion that he is sensitive to his own red' memory-traces of previous encounters with the object, and to the suggestion that he is sensitive to the red' memory traces of previous encounters had by others. The best suggestion is perhaps that, in such cases, he is sensitive to the red' experiences he imagines he would have were he to be confronted by the objects under standard conditions.<sup>11</sup> But even this best suggestion is hopeless. There are two reasons for this. First, much as with the other suggestions, this suggestion embodies a falsehood. Applying 'red' to an unseen object requires no imagined confrontation with it. Second, it simply cannot be offered as an unexplained brute fact that someone just does imagine some unseen objects to look this way. What does he believe about an unseen object that he does imagine to look this way that makes him imagine it to be such as to produce just *this* kind of experience? What property does he suppose it to have? It cannot be that he supposes it to have the property of being such as to look red. For though that would be consistent with allowing that the concept of being red may be cognitively prior to the concept of being red', it would require that we presuppose for mastery of the concept of being red mastery of that very concept. Nor can it be that he supposes it to have the property of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field. For though that would allow the concept of being red' to be definitionally prior to the concept of being red, it would require

that the concepts of being red and being red' are cognitively on a par.<sup>12</sup>

At this point Peacocke might well insist that we remember the second component of his account of mastery. For he requires *both* that one has a direct sensitivity to red' experiences *and* that one has a sensitivity to "evidence" (SC p. 37), or, perhaps better, to "indirect evidence" (CCCE p. 373) that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions. Clearly, he might say, it is the second of these that is supposed to explain why his account of mastery of the concept of being red is mastery of the concept of a property that unperceived objects may have. However, if Peacocke seeks to lean on this second condition, he seems to face a dilemma. For remember, he is trying to give an account of what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. He must therefore explain why it is appropriate to describe the sensitivity that one has, when one has a mastery of the concept of being red, as a sensitivity to evidence, or to indirect evidence, that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions.

Peacocke faces the first horn of the dilemma if the concept of evidence that he invokes is just the ordinary concept of evidence. For he would then be claiming that mastery of the concept of being red requires that one can grasp evidence that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions in the way that we ordinarily grasp evidence that *p*. This would leave him unable to explain how one may have mastery of the concept of being red without possessing the concept of being red'. For, according to our ordinary concept of evidence, a sensitivity to evidence that *p* requires that one can grasp what such evidence is evidence *for*. A sensitivity to evidence that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field would therefore actually *require* possession of the concept of being red'.

Peacocke faces the second horn of the dilemma if he invokes the concept of indirect evidence, and stipulates that this concept differs from the ordinary concept of evidence in that one can grasp indirect evidence that *p* without grasping what such evidence is evidence *for*, and hence without possessing the concepts from which the thought that *p* is built up. For he then needs to tell us more about the concept of indirect evidence. Why is it appropriate to describe what one grasps



as "indirect evidence that  $p$ ", if one cannot grasp what such evidence is evidence *for*; namely,  $p$ ? It might be thought that Peacocke needs simply to offer an *independent* account of the concept of indirect evidence. But it seems to me that no plausible independent account is possible. For surely a plausible account of the concept of indirect evidence will need to depend on a prior account of why it is appropriate to define a concept  $A$  in terms of another concept  $B$  even though one who grasps concept  $A$  need not possess concept  $B$ . For an explanation of why it is appropriate to describe a grasp of  $q$  as a grasp of indirect evidence that  $p$ , even though one who grasps that  $q$  need not possess the concepts for which the thought that  $p$  is built up, will surely be possible only if the latter is possible. For the problem one faces in giving the latter explanation is just the same as the problem one faces in giving the former, except that it is faced at the level of whole thoughts rather than at the level of component concepts. And, we might well ask, how *could* one have a solution to the problem at the level of whole thoughts unless one first had a solution to the problem at the level of component concepts? Thus, we might say, an appeal to the concept of indirect evidence cannot be an essential part of an argument to the conclusion that definitional and cognitive priority may come apart.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it will be thought that Peacocke should concede all this, for he can reply: "The (unstructured) concept of being seenred is a concept that may be cognitively prior to the concept of being red'. Nonetheless we can specify what it is to possess the (unstructured) concept of being seenred in terms of a direct sensitivity to the red'-ness of one's experiences under standard conditions. Thus red' is definitionally prior to seenred. We may now say that mastery of the concept of being red requires that one has a sensitivity to ordinary evidence that an object would be seenred were it seen under standard conditions. It is appropriate to describe this as a sensitivity to indirect evidence that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions precisely because, first, an object is seenred if and only if it is presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions, and second, red' is definitionally prior to seenred."<sup>14</sup> However, I do not think that Peacocke can avail himself of this response. For though this would allow that the concept of being red is cognitively prior to the concept of being red', it would require in addition that the (unstructured) concept of being seenred is

cognitively prior to the concept of being red. Now, whether or not this is so may be thought to be an empirical question. If it is, then the facts seem to me to support the view that the (unstructured) concept of being seenred is not cognitively prior to the concept of being red. For that concept seems to be, if anything, a more sophisticated concept than the concept of being red. For it requires not just that one not be disposed to judge of an unseen object that it is seenred. It requires in addition that one be disposed to judge that unseen objects are not seenred. And since we do not in fact seem so disposed prior to our grasp of 'red' (nor, for that matter, do many of us ever seem so disposed), it seems to me simply implausible to suppose that our route to red is via a grasp of seenred. If anything, I should say, our route to seenred seems to be via our grasp of red.<sup>15</sup>

If this is right, then we must conclude that Peacocke's attempt to reduce mastery of the concept of being red to a sensitivity to red' experiences plus a sensitivity to certain evidence simply fails. We are therefore still without an account of how one might specify, in terms of the concept of being red', what it is to possess the concept of being red, without requiring, for possession of the concept of being red, possession of the concept of being red'.<sup>16</sup>

## 4.

Peacocke's second attempt to justify his definition occurs in the following passage:

A definition of an object's being red as its disposition to present itself in a red' region of the visual field under certain conditions is good, not because it captures the way that everyone must think concerning an object's being red; rather. . . the judgements of one who has the concept of being red are responsive to experience and evidence in exactly the same ways as would be the judgements of one who explicitly used the definition. (SC p. 42; CCCE p. 377-78)

Peacocke does not give this condition a name. I shall call it the Responsiveness Condition. Does the fact that the concepts meet the Responsiveness Condition explain how we can specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red', while allowing that the concept of being red may be cognitively prior?

On a perfectly natural reading of this condition, the answer is surely that it does not. For according to this reading we require that:<sup>17</sup>

$$\forall x \forall y (x \text{ possesses } R \ \& \ y \text{ possesses } R') \rightarrow \forall e \forall o ((e \text{ causes } x \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R) \rightarrow (e \text{ causes } y \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R')) \ \& \ ((e \text{ causes } y \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R') \rightarrow (e \text{ causes } x \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R)).$$

That is, in short, we require that if the unsophisticated judgements concerning the redness of objects of those who possess the unsophisticated concept of being red are responsive to some set of experience and evidence  $e$ , then the sophisticated judgements of those who use the putative definition of red in terms of red' will be responsive to  $e$  in the same way, and we require further that if the sophisticated judgements of those who possess the sophisticated concept are responsive to some set of experience and evidence  $e$ , then the unsophisticated judgements of those who possess the unsophisticated concept will be responsive to  $e$  in the same way. That is we require that their patterns of evidential sensitivity be *identical*. But, since as Peacocke uses the terms 'evidence' a memory may constitute evidence (SC p. 111), it follows that, since the judgements of one who uses the putative definition would be responsive to evidence a grasp of which would require possession of the concept of being red' – memories concerning red' experiences whose contents are to be specified in terms of the concept of being red', for instance – so it follows that the Responsiveness Condition, read in this natural way, could be met only if one who possesses the concept of being red also possesses the concept of being red'. For only so could the final conjunct of the consequent be true.

This reading of the Responsiveness Condition therefore makes it mysterious why Peacocke should say that the definition is good "not because it captures the way that everyone must think concerning an object's being red". We therefore need to ask whether there is an alternative reading of the Condition. It seems to me that there is. But in order to see what the alternative reading is we must first consider Peacocke's distinction between a concept and, to use his terminology, the concept that gives the *constitutive role* of that concept. For the alternative reading is precisely a way of characterising when one concept gives the constitutive role of another. Let me explain.

Peacocke develops the notion of constitutive role in the context of a chapter on demonstrative content (SC Chapter 5, especially pp. 112–13). In keeping with his commitment to Frege's criterion for sameness

of thought – namely, sameness of cognitive significance – Peacocke claims that we can illuminate the content of demonstrative thoughts by way of considering the patterns of evidential sensitivity that they exhibit. For a thought's cognitive significance will be a function of its pattern of evidential sensitivity. A direct description of evidential patterns would consist of a function from sequences of perceptions, beliefs, and memories to thoughts. As Peacocke admits, even in the simplest case, "such a function must be of formidable complexity" (SC p. 111). However, he suggests, we can gain illumination about the content of a thought by considering its evidential pattern even without having a direct description of that pattern. His idea is that if we consider some thought whose evidential pattern *includes* that of the thought in whose content we are primarily interested, then we will gain what he calls an "indirect description" of the evidential pattern of the latter thought.

Thus he suggests, for example, that there is a pattern of evidential sensitivity displayed by the thought had by someone who, when he sees a bowl, thinks 'That bowl is Chinese', that is also exhibited by one who has the more sophisticated thought 'The bowl responsible, in the way required for perception, for the experience as of a bowl in *that* region of my visual field is Chinese'. This is because the experience and evidence that would cause one to judge the first thought would cause one with the more sophisticated concepts to judge the second thought, and because the experience and evidence that would cause one to judge the second thought would also cause him to judge the first thought. In general, whenever this is so, Peacocke says that the partially descriptive mode of presentation 'the object which is *C*' gives the *constitutive role* of the demonstrative mode of presentation '*D*'.<sup>18</sup>

Considering the matter more generally, Peacocke describes the condition that must be met when a concept *B* specifies the constitutive role of another concept *A*, as requiring that "the pattern of evidential sensitivity displayed in the use of . . . [concept *A*] . . . be the *same* as some part of the pattern of evidential sensitivity displayed by someone using more sophisticated concepts [*B*], concepts not necessarily possessed by someone using . . . [concept *A*]" (SC p. 112). This suggests the following alternative reading of the Responsiveness Condition:

$$\forall x \forall y (x \text{ possesses } R \ \& \ y \text{ possesses } R') \rightarrow \forall e \forall o ((e \text{ causes } x \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R) \rightarrow (e \text{ causes } y \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R')) \ \& \ ((e \text{ causes } y \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R') \rightarrow (e \text{ causes } y \text{ to judge that } o \text{ has } R)).^{19}$$

According to this reading, we require that if the judgements concerning the redness of objects of those who possess the ordinary concept of redness are responsive to experience and evidence *e*, then the sophisticated judgements of those who use the putative definition will be responsive to *e* in the same way, and we require further that anything that causes the sophisticated concept possessor to judge the sophisticated thought causes him to judge the unsophisticated thought as well. So understood the Condition does not require that one who possesses the concept of being red will be responsive to *all* of the evidence to which one who possesses the concept of being red' is responsive. Thus it is consistent with the satisfaction of the Condition, read in this way, that the concept of being red may be cognitively prior to the concept of being red'. But if this is what Peacocke had in mind, then he might just as well have said that the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions gives the *constitutive role* of the concept of being red.

We are now in a position to consider whether the fact that the concepts meet the alternative reading of the Responsiveness Condition entails that they are related as concept and definition. Equivalently, we may now ask, does the fact that the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions gives the *constitutive role* of the concept of being red entail that we can specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'?

It is easy to see why Peacocke might think that it does. For knowing that the more sophisticated concept gives the constitutive role of the concept of being red is in fact very illuminating. For, though the concepts are different, it shows that there is, as it were, *no more* for one with the more sophisticated concepts to grasp in grasping the concept of being red than what he has already grasped in grasping the more sophisticated concepts. It thus shows that grasp of the more sophisticated concepts is *inter alia* a grasp of the less sophisticated concepts. This may seem to support the conclusion that, at least for one with the more sophisticated concepts, we can specify what it is *for him* to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. And if we draw this particular conclusion, we may be tempted to draw the further conclusion that we can *quite generally* specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps Peacocke gives in to this temptation. However, we must resist doing so for two reasons. First, it is simply a

fallacy to draw the general conclusion from the particular. Second, even if one with the more sophisticated concepts must grasp the less sophisticated concept of being red, it doesn't seem to me even to follow that we can specify what it is *for him* to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. Thus it seems to me that we are unjustified even in drawing the particular conclusion. The reason is this.<sup>21</sup>

Since the evidential pattern displayed by the judgements of one who possesses the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions *includes* the evidential pattern displayed by the judgements of one who possesses the concept of being red, it follows that some *part* of the evidential pattern associated with the more sophisticated concept must be *identical* with the evidential pattern associated with the concept of being red. This much we can concede. The trouble is that, though the evidential pattern associated with the more sophisticated concept includes the evidential pattern associated with the concept of being red, the reason why is not the obvious one; that is, the reason is not that the evidential pattern associated with the concept of being red can be specified in terms of the concept of being red'.<sup>22</sup> Rather, the reason is that part of the evidential pattern associated with the more sophisticated concept must be specified in terms of the concept of being red. For since possession of the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions requires, *inter alia*, possession of the concept of being red, and since the concepts are necessarily co-extensive, so it follows that anything that is evidence for the redness of an object is, for one with the more sophisticated concepts, *inter alia*, evidence that it is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions. Thus the more sophisticated concept possessor's judgements concerning whether some object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions will be sensitive to evidence that that object is such as to *look red*. That is, part of the pattern of evidential sensitivity displayed by the more sophisticated concept possessor's judgements will need to be specified in terms of the concept of being red.

Peacocke has therefore given us no reason to think that, because the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions gives the constitutive role of the

concept of being red, so we can specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. His second attempt to justify his definition, that which appeals to the alternative reading of the Responsiveness Condition, thus also fails.<sup>23</sup>

## 5.

Peacocke claims to define red in terms of red'. He says that this claim to definition is justified because we can specify what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. He has two attempts at showing that this is so. However, his attempts both fail. Indeed, when we consider his attempts it emerges that it is implausible to suppose that we could specify what it is to possess red in terms of red'. What Peacocke does show is something weaker. He shows that, using red', we can construct a concept that gives what he calls the 'constitutive role' of the concept of being red. The relationship between a concept and the concept that gives the constitutive role of that concept seems to be a lot like a priori equivalence. But, importantly, a priori equivalence falls short of what Peacocke requires for definition.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, if we accept Peacocke's standard for definition, it follows that he gives us no way of avoiding the original dilemma, that of needing to define red in terms of looks red and looks red in terms of red. In a way this is a pity. For Peacocke's strategy, his idea that, since the characterisations we give of definitional and cognitive priority are different, so the two may come apart, is very attractive. But the fact that his idea is attractive goes no way towards showing that it is plausible. I can only conclude that if we accept Peacocke's standard for definition then we should join with Colin McGinn in giving up our attempts to define our secondary quality concepts.<sup>25</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See his *The Subjective View*, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 6–8, 13–14.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Two of his *Sense and Content*, Oxford University Press, 1983, and his 'Colour Concepts and Colour Experience', *Synthese*, 1984. In giving page references I shall refer to these as "SC" and "CCCE". In Peacocke's own words, the later paper "closely follows, and where different, supercedes" Chapter Two of his book (CCCE p. 379).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account of this distinction see SC Chapter 1.

- <sup>4</sup> Does this objection reduce to the Paradox of Analysis? It does not. See note 6.
- <sup>5</sup> For Peacocke's endorsement of this criterion see SC p. 109.
- <sup>6</sup> It should now be evident why this objection does not reduce to the Paradox of Analysis. Consider an analysis of concept *A* in terms of concept *B*. The Paradox of Analysis arises when we take it for granted that someone who possesses concept *A* possesses concept *B*. It arises because, given this, it is unclear how someone could find the claim that concept *B* constitutes an analysis of concept *A* *informative*. By contrast, the objection being raised here arises when we take it for granted that one who possesses concept *A* need not possess concept *B*. In such a case it is evident why the claim that concept *B* constitutes an analysis of concept *A* is *informative*. It is however unclear why the claim that concept *B* constitutes an *analysis* of concept *A* is *justified*. For it rules out the obvious justification that one might give, the justification that is presupposed whenever the Paradox of Analysis is thought to arise; namely, sameness of cognitive significance.
- <sup>7</sup> In CCCE the line in parentheses reads "(and when one has indirect evidence that it would meet this condition were it so presented)" (p. 373).
- <sup>8</sup> Strictly red' is a property not of *experiences*, but of *regions of the visual field*. However, like Peacocke, I will talk about red' experiences, and, whenever I do, such talk should be understood as being about regions of the visual field which are red'.
- <sup>9</sup> The three paragraphs that follow owe much to John Campbell.
- <sup>10</sup> We shall return to consider the (unstructured) concept of being seenred once again below.
- <sup>11</sup> This was suggested, though not endorsed, by Gabriel Segal.
- <sup>12</sup> It might be objected:

The argument in this paragraph depends on the undefended claim that the concept of a determinable cannot be possessed before the concepts of its determinates. If this claim were false a Peacocke-style reduction would be possible. For then, without possessing the concept of being red, it would be possible to have the thought 'That unseen object is same coloured as this imagined object.'

I have two comments on this. First, even if the objection were right, and the undefended claim were false, the first objection would still remain. There would still be a phenomenological falsehood. Second, I think that the objection fails anyway. For the objection requires at least that a direct sensitivity to red' experiences, perhaps together with a sensitivity to other colour' experiences, suffices (in some way) for possession of the concept of colour. Now, we have already seen that a direct sensitivity to red' experiences would not equip one with the concept of a determinate colour property. The reason is that determinate colour properties can be had by unseen objects. But colour too is a property that unseen objects can have. The same problem would therefore surely remain. How could a direct sensitivity to red' experiences, even along with a bunch of other such sensitivities, suffice for possession of the concept of colour, or indeed of *any* property that could be had by unseen objects? (I am at this point grateful to Mark Johnston for helpful discussions.)

<sup>13</sup> Peacocke does in fact offer an *independent* account of the concept of indirect evidence later in *Sense and Content*. I return to consider its impact on his account of mastery in note 23.



<sup>14</sup> This was suggested to me by André Gallois.

<sup>15</sup> Here I assume that concept *A* is definitionally prior to concept *B* iff (i)  $(\forall x)(\text{We can specify what it is for } x \text{ to possess concept } B \text{ in terms of concept } A)$ . If in fact someone could first possess the (unstructured) concept of being seenred, and then use it to get the concept of being red, then, in conjunction with the story about the relationship between seenred and red', that would show at most that we can specify what it is to possess red in terms of red' in the sense of (ii)  $(\exists x)(\text{We can specify what it is for } x \text{ to possess concept } B \text{ in terms of concept } A)$ .

<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that nothing said here counts against the idea that mastery of the concept of being red, like mastery of the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions, is, inter alia, constituted by a direct sensitivity to red' experiences under standard conditions. We may find this claim plausible even if we do not think it possible to give a complete reductive account of mastery of the concept of being red.

<sup>17</sup> Here *x* and *y* range over persons, *e* ranges over experiences and evidence, and *o* ranges over objects. "x possesses *R*" says that *x* possesses the concept of redness, "y possesses *R*" says that *y* possesses the concept of being such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions, and "*o* has *R*" says that *o* has the property of redness.

<sup>18</sup> Peacocke does give some restrictions only under which the pattern of evidential sensitivity of the judgements of a more sophisticated concept possessor will include that of the judgements of a less sophisticated concept possessor (SC pp. 112–13). However, for present purposes, these can safely be ignored.

<sup>19</sup> The difference is that in the final conjunct 'x' is changed to 'y'.

<sup>20</sup> I here once again assume that a claim to definitional priority is established by the general conclusion, not by the particular conclusion; that is, by (i), not by (ii) (see note 15).

<sup>21</sup> Here I argue that, even if, implausibly I should say, Peacocke held that (ii) suffices to establish definitional priority (see note 15), we have no reason to think that the argument he provides shows that red and red' are related as in (ii).

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, after the discussion in section 3, we should have known that this obvious explanation couldn't be right. For the whole point of section 3 was to show that one who possesses the concept of being red is sensitive to evidence that unseen objects are such as to *look red*, and that we cannot specify what it is to have a sensitivity to such evidence in terms of the concept of being red'.

<sup>23</sup> Let's return to consider Peacocke's account of mastery of the concept of being red which requires, inter alia, a sensitivity to indirect evidence that objects would be such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field were they so presented under standard conditions. We complained that he needs to supply an account of the concept of indirect evidence, an account that makes it clear why it is appropriate to describe whatever it is that one does grasp, when one grasps indirect evidence that *p*, as "indirect evidence that *p*". In the chapter on demonstrative content Peacocke spells out the concept of indirect evidence as follows. When a partially descriptive mode of presentation 'the object which is *C*' specifies the constitutive role of a demonstrative mode of presentation '*D*', then, according to Peacocke, someone possessing just the demonstrative concept who possesses evidence of the truth of '*D* is *F*', possesses "*evidence*"<sup>23</sup> that the object which is *C*

is *F*. As he puts it, "Evidence\* is wider than evidence both in that it includes for instance experiences which may cause judgements and in that, as introduced, someone may have evidence\* that *p* without having all the concepts from which the thought that *p* is built up" (SC p. 113). The concept of 'indirect evidence' in terms of which Peacocke gives his account of mastery thus turns out to be none other than evidence\*. However, this is not a happy result. For the whole point of introducing the concept of indirect evidence was that it would allow us to specify what is required for possession of the concept of being red *in terms of the concept of being red'*: according to Peacocke, mastery requires, inter alia, a sensitivity to indirect evidence that objects would be such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field were they so presented under standard conditions. But indirect evidence is just evidence\*, and evidence\* that an object is such as to be presented in a red' region of the visual field under standard conditions is, inter alia, just ordinary evidence that an object is red, graspable by someone who possesses the concept of being red. But such a person would be sensitive to evidence that an object would be such as to *look red*. We therefore do not have here an account of mastery of the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red'. Rather we have a specification of what it is to possess the concept of being red in terms of the concept of being red. Peacocke's account of mastery of the concept of being red thus becomes circular.

<sup>24</sup> The question arises whether we should allow a priori equivalence itself to suffice for definition. However this is a question that I will not consider further here.

<sup>25</sup> Earlier versions of this paper were read at seminars at Wolfson and Oriel Colleges Oxford, Monash University, the University of Melbourne and Princeton University. I would like to thank those who participated in these seminars, especially: John Bigelow, David Charles, Adrian Cussins, Jamie Dreier, David Lewis, Michael Morris, Denis Robinson, Gideon Rosen, Gabriel Segal, Nathan Tawil and Crispin Wright. I am also much indebted to Simon Blackburn, John Campbell, André Gallois, Lloyd Humberstone, Mark Johnston and an anonymous referee from *Synthese* for their many valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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Department of Philosophy  
 Princeton University  
 1879 Hall  
 Princeton, NJ 08544  
 U.S.A.