

**PHENOMENAL
CONSCIOUSNESS:
QUALIA & QUINNING
QUALIA**

Phenomenal Consciousness

Phenomenal Concept of Mind

Psychological Concept of Mind

The phenomenal concept of mind is the concept of mind as conscious experience, and of a mental state as a consciously experienced mental state.

The psychological concept of mind is the concept of mind as the causal or explanatory basis of behaviour.

According to the phenomenal concept of mind, mind is characterized by the way it feels.

On the other hand, psychological concept of mind is characterized by what it does.

For Chalmers, this distinction between psychological and phenomenal mind is absolutely necessary.

He remarks, “I will sometimes speak of the phenomenal and psychological ‘aspects’ of mind, and sometimes of the ‘phenomenal mind’ and the ‘psychological mind’. At this early stage, I do not wish to beg any question about whether the phenomenal and the psychological will turn out to be the same thing.”

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According to Chalmers, every phenomenal state is a psychological state, in that it plays a significant role in the causation and explanation of behaviour, and every psychological state has an intimate relation to the phenomenal.

There is a conceptual distinction between the two notions; what it means for a state to be phenomenal is for it to feel a certain way, and what it means for a state, to be psychological is for it to

Descartes held that every event in the mind is a *cogitatio*, or a content of experience.

Whatever is a mental content is necessarily, according to Descartes, a content of conscious experience.

The move from behaviourism to computational cognitive science for the most part preserved the idea that there are no intentional mental states.

Although the move brought back a role for internal states, which could even be called ‘mental’ states, there was nothing particularly ‘phenomenal’ about them.

These states were admissible precisely on the grounds of their role in the explanation of behaviour. The concept of the mental therefore was taken to be synonymous with the psychological.

This explanation of phenomenal concepts leaves it unclear why there is anything phenomenal at all.

There is no great mystery about how a state might play a causal role, but what is truly mysterious is why that state should feel like something; why it should have a phenomenal quality at all.

Chalmers words,

“there is no great mystery about how a state might play some causal role, although there are certainly technical problems there for science. What is mysterious is why that state should feel like something; why it should have a phenomenal quality. Why the causal role is played and why the phenomenal quality is present are two entirely different questions. The functionalist analysis denies the distinctness of these questions, and therefore to be

unsatisfactory.”

The phenomenal concepts deal with the first-person aspects of mind, while psychological concepts deal with the third-person aspects.

The dualism between the phenomenal and the psychological is the fact that dualism between the first-person and the third-person perspectives of the mind.

The First-Person and Third-Person Perspective of mind

The double aspects of mental terms are psychological and phenomenal.

The concept of 'pain' provides a clear example. The term is often used to name a particular sort of unpleasant phenomenal quality.

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The concept of sensation, which is close to the concept of perception has both phenomenal and psychological components.

The phenomenal component is more prominent in 'sensation' than in 'perception'. Sensation is something like perception's phenomenal counterpart.

The questions are:

Can there be a mental concept which is psychological but not phenomenal?

Is it the case that the psychological and the phenomenal are factually co-occurrent, but are independent causally?

Chalmers endorses the factual co-occurrence of the psychological and phenomenal but not their necessary relation.

It is evidenced in his analysis the propositional attitudes like beliefs, desire, etc. In the case of propositional attitudes the central feature of these mental states is their semantic content, or intentionality.

Phenomenal experience thus is not directly associated with a propositional attitude.

Searle says,

“the intentional content of a belief depends entirely on the associated state of consciousness that the belief can bring about. Without consciousness, all that is present is ‘as if’ intentionality.”

Searle, John, “Consciousness, Explanatory Inversion and Cognitive Science”, 1990.

However, Chalmers has shown that all mental states have a psychological and a phenomenal aspect, and we need not legislate which is primary, although a strong case might be made for a psychological analysis.

There is no aspect of this state that outstrips both the psychological and the phenomenal. Thus, psychology and the phenomenology together constitute the central aspects of the mind.

Inspite of togetherness between phenomenology and psychology, Chalmers holds that we cannot identify the phenomenal

There are two distinct aspects of the mind. Therefore, the phenomenal is picked out as ‘the experience that tends to accompany psychological’; we can coherently imagine a situation in which the phenomenal quality occurs without the psychological property.

This distinction between the phenomenal and the psychological is source of the distinction between the ‘easy’ and the ‘hard’ aspects of the human mind.

The Phenomenal Consciousness

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As we have seen mental terms are dual in nature. There are two concepts of consciousness, i.e., psychological consciousness and phenomenal consciousness.

It is clear that there is a phenomenal and a psychological property in the vicinity of each of these concepts.

The phenomenal and the psychological properties in the vicinity of these notions tend to occur together, but as with other mental concepts, they should not be conflated.

We may point out that the psychological perspective of consciousness can be analyzable in terms of phenomenal perspective, but phenomenal consciousness cannot be explained in terms of psychological perspective because of its irreducibility and non-computational nature.

The reductive explanation of consciousness is not possible because consciousness cannot be logically supervene on the physical.

This non-reductive aspect of consciousness is 'naturally supervenient', but not 'logically supervenient'.

If phenomenal consciousness would have been logically supervenient on the physical body, then it would have been functionally identical with the latter. In that case, consciousness would be explained completely in terms of the physical properties.

Therefore, one cannot reduce facts about consciousness to physical facts and cannot explain the occurrence of consciousness.

Chalmers argues that there is little hope that a purely physicalist or materialist theory can explain consciousness at all, especially the phenomenal or qualitative aspects of

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If it is logically supervenient, there would be no such epistemic asymmetry, a logically supervenient can be detected straightforwardly and there is no special role for the first person case.

Chalmers shows that consciousness is a first-person phenomena and cannot be inferred or defined from the physicalistic point of view.

This is because there is 'gap' between physical level and level of conscious experience.

Consciousness cannot be explained reductively, but can be explained in its own terms. Because the conscious mental states as distinguished from the physical facts have a subjective aspect.

For example, the mental state of pain which is not the same as the state of the brain, since there is subjective experience of pain is not explainable in terms of the computational functions of the brain. Thus conscious experience cannot be reductively explained in terms of physical and functional laws of the brain.

QUALIA

- The term 'qualia' means the qualitative character of experience.
- Every experience has a distinctive qualitative character. The subjective or qualitative feel of a conscious experience is characterized as something, which the organisms necessarily have in order to be conscious.
- Thus, qualia are the qualitative subjective experiences of mental states and the properties of conscious experience.

The question is:

- **Are these subjective experiences or qualia real?**
- **It is a controversial question among philosophers whether qualia are definable in functional terms and whether qualia are the physiological states of the brain.**
- **The most important argument is that qualia are the functional states of the brain and, thus, are real only as the physical states of the brain.**
- **Opposed to this is the argument that qualia are the qualitative feel of the conscious states and so are subjective in character.**

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- The first-person experiences such as pain, colour sensation, the sensation of touch and smell, etc. are the qualitative experiences of mental states.
- These mental states are the common stuff of our mind.
- For example, in having the smell of flowers or the taste of ice cream, we have subjective experience of these things, but we cannot describe them because these experiences have a distinctive phenomenological character. Our color experiences are such that there is something like to have them with a phenomenological image. A quale is thus a mental state that has the property of being a

- **Qualia constitute the essence of the conscious states.**
- **For example, the quale 'pain' is the feeling of pain rather than a mere bodily sensation. Thus, the qualia are the raw feels associated with the conscious states.**

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- Searle argues that every conscious state has a certain qualitative feel to it.
- For example, the experience of tasting beer is very different from hearing some music and from smelling a rose or watching movie, both of these have a different qualitative character. Hence, there are the different qualitative features of conscious experience.
- Thus, qualia constitute the essential properties of conscious experience. That is why, one cannot derive pleasure of drinking beer by listening to music, or the pleasure of witnessing sunset by smelling a rose.

According to the reductionists, qualia can be explained in terms of the neurophysiological events in the brain and its interactions with the environment.

For epiphenomenalism, qualia are causally dependent or 'supervenient' on the brain events, but cannot be directly identified with such events.

For dualism, qualia are independent of physics, and autonomous in this existence.

According to Dennett, there are no such things as qualia or the qualitative subjective experiences.

He does not accept the reality of the qualia, because he believes that the qualia is the private experience of how things look like, and there is nothing in the mind which can correspond to these **qualitative features of the mental states.**

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Dennett writes:

Qualia is an unfamiliar term for something that could not be more familiar to each of us: the ways things seem to us... Look at a glass of milk at sunset; the way it looks to you—the particular, personal, subjective visual quality of the glass of milk is the quale of your visual experience at the moment. The way the milk tastes to you then is another, gustatory quale, and how it sounds to you as you swallow is an auditory quale. These various “properties of conscious experience” are prime examples of qualia.

For him, qualia are supposed to be properties of a subject's mental states that are by definition ineffable, intrinsic, private and immediately apprehensible in consciousness. But such properties have absolutely no use in our understanding of consciousness. They are as good as non-existence.

The qualitative experiences, according to him, are the functional states of the brain. These are not different from what happens in the brain when the brain is stimulating by the external environment.

Thus, Dennett concludes that qualia do not exist.

Pradhan point out, “the mental life of man cannot be fully represented in a mechanistic system and that there are subjective mental states which need a first-person perspective for their proper understanding.”

Pradhan, R. C., ‘Why Qualia Cannot be Quined’ *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Volume XIX Number 2, April-June 2002.

Inverted Qualia

Our conscious mental states have distinctive qualitative features.

For example, a man has a visual experience of red colour, which differs qualitatively from the kind of experience he has when he looks at a green thing.

According to the inverted spectrum, or inverted qualia argument if our functional organizations were realized in a different physical substrate, a system may still have experience, but it would have a different kind of experience.

A person who sees something as red today and may see yellow tomorrow. Here the thing remains constant, but his color experience can vary from red to yellow.

In this case, the person's color experience is inverted in the sense that he sees something different from what he used to see earlier. He only describes his previous experience of red as that of yellow now.

We cannot deny the logical possibility of our qualia being inverted in the case of oneself and of others.

Qualia inversion would not possible if the conscious states would have been

In case of consciousness, qualia-inversion is possible because qualia are the properties of the mental states, which cannot be ascribed to the physical and machine states.

The machine functionalist's view about consciousness that it must be rejected because conscious states are not physical states, and because conscious states have qualia.

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The very possibility of inverted qualia challenges computational functionalism, because the computational states cannot have any qualia.

For example, two people with red-green inversion have different inner lives. Such persons may be input-output equivalent, but they are not mentally equivalent. It is because, even if the two systems are mechanically equivalent, they do not have the same mental properties.

Thus, inverted qualia are an epistemic problem, even if they are not metaphysically problematic.

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Functionalism is able to explain the qualia in terms of functional states of the brain but not the inner or qualitative nature of our mental states.

The problem for functionalism is- even if my spectrum is inverted related with yours, we remain functionally isomorphic with each other. My visual sensation is functionally identical with your visual sensation.

Therefore, they are the same type of state, and it does not make sense to suppose that my sensation is 'really' a sensation-of-green. If it meets the functional conditions for being a sensation-of-red, then by definition it is a sensation-of-red. According to functionalism, a

In the inverted spectrum case, we have two persons whose experiences are functionally and intentionally same but qualitatively inverted.

There are two kinds of content of experience, one is intentional or representational content and the other is qualitative or sensational content.

If my spectrum is inverted with respect to John's, then in the qualitative sense red things look the same to me as green

looks to John.

The functionalists argue that in case of interpersonal spectrum inversion, it is most implausible to suppose that the subjects concerned would really be functionally equivalent in respect of their colour experiences.

That means, there are causal relations between our colour experiences and our emotional responses. There is no reason to think that the different physiological realizations of the experience of red things involve any experiential difference.

For example, the mental state like the experience of red has alternative physiological realizations, and this is held to be just a case of alternative realizations of the very same experience.

Thus, if qualia inversion is possible, functionalism is false.

Ned Block discusses a case of two persons whose experiences are qualitatively the same but intentionally and functionally inverted in his Inverted Earth case.

Inverted Earth is just like earth, except that the colors around us change. When one uses inverted spectrum spectacles, appearances change: grass becomes red, sky becomes yellow, etc.

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David Chalmers argues that the absent-qualia hypothesis challenges not only functionalism but also versions of physicalism. Just as a qualia-free functional duplicate of a conscious human being seems possible, a qualia-free physical duplicate seems possible.

Such creatures are known as phenomenal zombies. We cannot see any conscious experience in such a system. In this case, a zombie may have mind just like us, beliefs, desires and even pains functionally equivalent to us, but it would never enjoy mental states with qualitative character.

Here the qualia are absent and there is a zombie externally identical to ourselves but lacking an

Chalmers discusses 'fading qualia' as a positive argument against the possibility of absent qualia. A thought experiment is involved with the replacement of parts of a brain by silicon chips.

Chalmers' dancing qualia is also an argument against the possibility of inverted qualia. In this case, the structural features of these systems' experiences are preserved throughout.

Chalmers argues that though it is logically possible to have dancing qualia and fading qualia, it is not practically possible to have them. It follows that we have good reason to believe that the principle of organizational invariance is true, and that functional organization fully determines conscious experience.

Functionalists and physicalists sometimes respond by challenging the coherence of the absent qualia hypothesis.

For example, Shoemaker argues that a true functional duplicate of a conscious human must have introspective beliefs about its own sensory states, which in his view entails that some of its states have qualia.

Another reply is to concede that the absent qualia hypothesis is coherent,

The first-person point of view only takes the mental states as belonging to a person from his/her subjective point of view.

The raw feelings of our consciousness are ontologically real, because they are the ultimate qualitative objects, which make up the phenomenal mind.

The qualia constitute the essence of consciousness and are intrinsic to the conscious subjects.

Lastly, we cannot doubt the fact that other human beings can see colors differently. Even in our own case, we may see colors differently in different situations.

Therefore, both the intrasubjective and intersubjective quale inversions are possible, and we can always imagine what could happen to our present color experience in a different situation.

This inversion is possible because we have all the relevant conceptual resources to think of the inverted qualia.

Quinning Qualia

Dennett have argued for eliminating qualia from the discourse of mind.

According to Dennett, “qualia are supposed to be properties of a subjects that are (1) ineffable, (2) intrinsic, (3) private, (4) directly or immediately appraisable in consciousness.”

Dennett, Daniel C., “Quining Qualia” in *The Nature Of Consciousness*, Ned Block Owen Flanagan, and Guiven Guzeldere (ed.), The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998.

- **Qualia are ineffable because one cannot say exactly what way one is currently seeing, tasting, smelling, and so forth.**
- **Why qualia are ineffable is that they are intrinsic properties, which seems to imply inter alia that they are somehow atomic and unanalyzable.**
- **Since they are simple, there is nothing to get hold of when trying to describe such property.**

- Since qualia are ineffable and intrinsic, qualia are private because all interpersonal comparisons of these of appearing are systematically impossible.
- Lastly, since they are properties of experiences, qualia are directly accessible to the consciousness because qualia are properties of one's experiences with which one is immediately apprehensible in

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Is Dennett right in calling qualia the private and ineffable experiences of a queer sort?

Pradhan argues, “the notion of privacy as we know from Wittgenstein’s private language argument does not apply to the qualia in the sense that the qualia are intersubjectively intelligible and that they are available for inter-personal communication. The qualia of colour-perception are such that any two persons belonging to the same linguistic community can easily communicate their colour-experiences and can understand each other well. This shows that the qualia, in spite of being subjective, are not private at all. As to their effability or otherwise, it goes without saying that they are expressible in an interpersonal language; that is the reason why they are accessible to all speakers if they are suitably placed.”

Pradhan, R. C., “Why Qualia Cannot be Quined” in *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol-XIX, No-2, April-June, 2002.

- **Dennett is skeptical about the reality of the qualia because he believes qualia to be the private experiences and there is nothing in the mind that can correspond to these qualitative features of the mental states.**
- **Dennett argues against qualia, because for him, the brain functions as a machine.**
- **For Dennett, the mind turns out to be a computing machine programmed to**

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Now the question is: Can the qualia be made a part of the third-person perspective?

Dennett's reductionist program is fully committed to the reducibility of the qualia to the brain-state. However, this can be opposed on the ground that the qualia are ascribed to a conscious subject and not to the brain because the brain is a physical system though with infinite physical capacity. The subject is not reducible to the brain in the sense that **brain itself belongs to the subject.**

Functionalism is incompatible with our semantic externalism because functional organism is not simply a matter of ‘sensory inputs’, transition from one state to another, and ‘motor outputs’.

Semantic externalism refers to the content of our words and thoughts, which is partly determined by our relation with things in environment.

There are two aspects of this thesis, the epistemological and the metaphysical.

Epistemologically, the subject of consciousness intimately knows the raw feelings.

Metaphysically speaking, however, the raw feelings are real in the sense that they are part of the furniture of the mental world.