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# The Plurality of Consciousness

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*William G. Lycan*

## THE PLURALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS<sup>1</sup>

William G. Lycan

My topics are consciousness. The plural is deliberate.

Both in philosophy and in psychology, “the problem of consciousness” is supposed to be very special. And the past fifteen years have seen an explosion of work on “it” by philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists as well. Besides the individual journal articles and books, there is now a vigorous *Journal of Consciousness Studies*; and John Benjamins Publishing Company’s book series, *Advances in Consciousness Research*, is flourishing and includes some excellent works.

But if we look closely at some sample texts, we are struck by an astonishing diversity of topics that have gone under the heading of “consciousness.”

1. Here is one sample text. Martin Davies and Glyn Humphreys begin the Introduction to their acclaimed anthology, *Consciousness* (1993), as follows.

Consciousness is, perhaps, the aspect of our mental lives that is the most perplexing, for both psychologists and philosophers. *The Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology* contains as its entry for *consciousness*: ‘the having of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; awareness. The term is impossible to define except in terms that are unintelligible without a grasp of what consciousness means’ (Sutherland, 1989, p. 90). [For whatever reason, Davies and Humphreys chose not to quote the entry’s concluding sentence: ‘Nothing worth reading has been written on it.’] On the side of philosophy, Daniel Dennett notes in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* that consciousness ‘is both the most obvious and the most mysterious feature of our minds’ (Gregory, 1987, p. 160); and Thomas Nagel famously remarks (1974, p. 166), ‘Without consciousness the mind-body problem would be much less interesting. With consciousness it seems hopeless.’

These remarks might suggest that consciousness—indefinable and mysterious—falls outside the scope of rational enquiry, defying both scientific and philosophical investigation. But, in fact, the topic spans the history of psychology from William James until the present; and the past fifteen or twenty years have also seen an upsurge of philosophical interest in the place of consciousness in the natural order. [p. 1]

These paragraphs assume, or seem to, that there is this one thing, consciousness (that is elusive and hard to define and perhaps outside the scope of rational enquiry). The authors later go on to qualify that idea, distinguishing some notions that are so different as to have little to do with each other. But there are still many readers who would be taken in by those opening paragraphs if they didn’t read further.

And in fact, the anthologized essays are a grab-bag; some of them bear no discernible relation to others. The collection contains (besides philosophical articles on the distinct(!) topics of awareness, qualia, and subjectivity), “Theory and Measurement in the Study of Unconscious Processes,” “Impairments of Visual Awareness,” “Freud’s Cognitive Psychology of Intention: The Case of Dora,” and “The Intentionality of Animal Action.” Brian Smith once said of computation that it “is a *site*, not a subject-matter”; “consciousness” is a flea market or jumble sale, not even a site.

2. By way of complaining about philosophers’ habitual logic-chopping, distinction-mongering, verbal disputation, etc., my psychologist friend Paul Schulman once told me, “We don’t care what anything is *called*; we just want to *measure* it.” Damned right, too; what does it matter which problems have been called “consciousness”? Philosophers should not care what the distinct problems are called either. But everyone ought to care that they *are distinct*. Conflation of them is not merely a theoretical possibility. It has occurred, over and over again, resulting in countless confusions and errors. I urge us all to keep the distinct problems distinct. Not only will confusion and error thereby be avoided; I argue that if we divide we shall conquer.

Some of the topics and issues that have gone under the heading of “consciousness” are brutally empirical. Some are more abstractly theoretical. Some are outright philosophical and conceptual. I myself see these differences as differences of degree only, but they are still differences. One important difference, though far from the only one, is that of “how does” questions from “how possibly” questions – e.g., “How does a human subject/brain accomplish such-and-such a task?,” vs. “How could any theory of kind so-and-so possibly explain this refractory feature of human experience?” or “How could a mere information-processing system possibly have properties of this remarkable sort?”

Scientists sometimes pay lip service to one notorious “how possibly” question or another, and even voice that question in a tone of awed respect, but then proceed to announce that what we need is more information-processing models, or more neuroscience, ignoring the theoretical obstacle that drives the “how possibly” question, the obstacle that makes the relevant achievement seem impossible.<sup>2</sup>

For example, all too often we hear it suggested that advances in neuroscience will solve Thomas Nagel’s (1974) and Frank Jackson’s (1982) conceptual problem of “knowing what it’s like” – or even that advances in neuroscience *have* solved it. This is grievously confused. For Nagel’s and Jackson’s claim is precisely that there is an irreducible kind of phenomenal knowledge that cannot be revealed by science of any kind. Nagel’s and Jackson’s respective “Knowledge Arguments” for this radical thesis are purely philosophical; they contain no premises that depend on scientific fact. Now, either the arguments are unsound or they are sound. If they are unsound, then so far as has been shown, there is no such irreducible knowledge, and neither science nor anything else is needed to produce it. But if the arguments are sound, they show that

no amount of science could possibly help to produce the special phenomenal knowledge. Either way, neither neuroscience nor any other science is pertinent. (I shall discuss Jackson's argument below.)

And in general, no appeal to normal science is going to answer any philosopher's "how possibly" question, though it might happen that some hidden corner of normal science would lessen the force of such a question.

3. Here are some of the topics and issues that have gone under the "c-" heading.

- Consciousness as opposed to *unconsciousness* (the "normal waking state").
- Empirical questions of accessibility, attention, and reportability.
- The control of voluntary action.
- The temporal anomalies (color phi, the cutaneous rabbit, etc.).
- The Binding Problem(s).
- The development of the *self* concept.
- Some matters of intention and forming intentions.
- Putative "consciousness" deficits: The possession of information without awareness of that information.
  - Blindsight.
  - Semantic (etc.) priming.
  - Agnosias with "covert knowledge."
  - Neglect, ditto.

So far, these topics are all empirical, or at least toward the empirical end of the spectrum. Some, like the temporal anomalies, are of more philosophical interest than others.<sup>3</sup> But now here are some more abstract and theoretical ones.

*State/event consciousness*: A state of a subject, or an event occurring within the subject, is a conscious as opposed to an unconscious or subconscious state or event iff the subject is aware of being in the state / hosting the event. In virtue of what is the subject aware of some of her/his own mental goings-on but unaware of others?

*Introspection and introspective awareness*, and privileged access to the internal character of one's experience itself. I am directly or "directly" aware of my own experience, or some of it, in a way that you cannot be; that needs explaining.

*Qualia (strictly so called)*: The monadic, first-order qualitative features of apparent phenomenal objects. When you are experiencing a yellowy-orange after-image, what exactly is it that has the yellowy-orange color? For that matter, when you are (veridically) seeing a ripe banana, there is a corresponding yellow patch in your visual field. What ontological account is to be given of the yellowness of that patch (which might be as it is even if the banana were not real)? Bertrand Russell took it to be obvious, in need of no argument at all, that the bearers of such phenomenal color properties are nonphysical in-

dividuals, “sense data” as he called them; for impressive argument in addition, see Jackson (1977).

*Homogeneity or grainlessness:* The smooth continuous character of a phenomenal quality such as color, as contrasting with the discrete, particulate nature of the material of which we are made. The after-image is entirely yellowy-orange, yellowy-orange through and through, without gaps, and it has no part that is not yellowy-orange. But nothing in the physical world has no part that is not yellowy-orange. (Sellars, 1962, 1965, 1971.)

*The intrinsic perspectivalness, point-of-view-iness, and/or first-personishness of experience,* as discussed by Gunderson (1970), Nagel (1974) and others. In one way or another, our experience of our own mental states requires the adopting of a very special point of view; our experience of our external environment, though invariably from a point of view, is not perspectival in the same, deeper way.

*Funny facts,* or special phenomenal knowledge as allegedly revealed by the “Knowledge Arguments” mentioned above. It seems that the facts must be nonphysical facts.

*The ineffability of “what it’s like”* (in the higher-order sense): One often cannot express in words what it is like to have a particular sensation. What is it like to experience the yellowy-orange of a yellowy-orange after-image? (It’s *yellowy-orange*, yes, I heard you the first time; but can you tell someone in intrinsic, not comparative, terms, what it’s like to experience visual yellowy-orange?)

*The “explanatory gap”* called to our attention by Joseph Levine (1983, 1993): Even if God were to assure us that, say, the Type-Identity Theory of mind is true and that such-and-such a conscious experience is strictly identical with a firing of certain neural fibers, we would still lack an explanation of why those fiber firings feel to their subjects in the distinctive way they do. Indeed, to Levine it seems “arbitrary” that they do.

4. Psychologists and (especially) philosophers have tended to think of “consciousness” in the same mental breath as “phenomenal experience.” But notice that phenomenal experience is necessarily involved only in the last six of the foregoing issues, and has nothing intrinsically to do with any of the others. (I shall call the last six, *qualia-strictly-so-called* through the explanatory gap, “the problems of phenomenal experience.”) Just those six are perhaps a daunting array.

Theories “of consciousness” have been offered by cognitive psychologists (Mandler (1985), Baars (1988), Shallice (1988a, 1988b), Johnson-Laird (1988), Schacter (1989), Kosslyn and Koenig (1992)), and by neuroscientists (Edelman (1989, 1992); Crick and Koch (1990)). Philosophers have put forward others: D.M. Armstrong’s (1968, 1981) Lockean “inner sense” theory, David Rosenthal’s (1993) Higher-Order Thought theory, D.C. Dennett’s (1991) Multiple Drafts theory. However, the key thing to grasp about all of these is that not one of them even *addresses* any of the six problems of phenomenal experience. I am not speaking pejoratively and I do not mean my previous assertion as a criticism of any of the theories. Some of their creators did not really aim them at

any of the six problems, even though they paid lip service as recorded above. Others, particularly the philosophers, did not even superficially intend them to address the six problems. The theories were aimed at different phenomena and may be admirable explanations of those phenomena.

I draw two morals: First, no one should claim that problems of phenomenal experience have been solved by any purely cognitive or neuroscientific theory. (I find myself in surprising agreement with Chalmers (1996) on that.) Second and perhaps more importantly, the theories cannot fairly be criticized for failing to illuminate problems of phenomenal experience. And many of them have been so criticized, e.g., by Chalmers (1996).<sup>4</sup> Armstrong's and Rosenthal's theories, in particular, are very explicitly theories of *awareness* and of privileged access, not theories of qualia or of subjectivity or of "what it's like." (In fact, both Armstrong and Rosenthal offer theories of qualia, but quite different theories, and elsewhere (Armstrong (1968, 1999), Rosenthal (1991)). Never criticize a philosophical theory for not explaining X unless the theory is either a theory of X or a theory of something which essentially includes X – at least not when its proponent quite rationally disavows concern for X.

5. It is the problems of phenomenal experience that have most greatly exercised philosophers, often under the heading "the problem of phenomenal experience." (Chalmers (1996) calls "it" "the hard problem of consciousness.") But even once we have split off the six from the preceding ten and more, we must continue to distinguish and divide. Much harm has resulted, within philosophy, from conflating among the six themselves. To make progress, we must take them one at a time.

For the record – well, not only for it – I will note my own positions on each of the six problems,<sup>5</sup> and then conclude with a remark on why the positions are dialectically important.

*Qualia (strictly so called):* Again, qualia in my sense are the introspectible qualitative phenomenal features that characteristically inhere in sensory experiences, such as the color of an after-image or any other patch of color occupying some region of your ordinary visual field right now; other examples are the pitch or the volume of a heard sound, and the smell of a smell. I emphasize that these are phenomenal properties. They may be part of normal, veridical sensory experience; or they may be hallucinatory or otherwise purely subjective, and correspond to nothing in the subject's actual environment.

In previous works I have called qualia "introspectible monadic properties of apparent phenomenal individuals," meaning the characteristic properties of what Russell thought were actual phenomenal individuals, i.e., of what he called sense-data; Russell took qualia in my sense to be first-order properties of sense-data. But my reference to "apparent phenomenal individuals" has sometimes confused readers, since it may be hard to think about "characteristic properties of" sense-data without falling in with the assumption that there really are sense-data. Yet it is crucial to see that one need not believe in sense-data to believe in qualia. Most of us reject Russell's idea that an after-image is an actual

and nonphysical individual thing, but if you are experiencing a yellowy-orange after-image, you cannot deny that in some sense there is yellowy-orangeness in your visual field; yellowy-orangeness is *somehow* visually exemplified and present to you. If the yellowy-orangeness is (indeed) not a first-order property of an immaterial sense-datum, then of what is it a property, and/or, what kind of property is it? We must relocate it ontologically. And I maintain (Lycan (1987, 1996)) that this is a very difficult metaphysical problem.

To see the difficulty, suppose that while you are experiencing the after-image, there is in reality no yellowy-orange physical object in your environment. Suppose also that there is no yellowy-orange physical object in your brain. But there is a yellowy-orange *something* before you, Russellian sense-datum or not. If there is no yellowy-orange physical object outside your head and no yellowy-orange physical object inside your head, it follows that the yellowy-orange something is a nonphysical object. So much for materialism; it seems that the yellowy-orange something might as well be a sense-datum after all.

To carry us between the horns of the foregoing dilemma, I defend what has come to be called the Representational theory of the qualitative features of apparent phenomenal objects: When you see a (real) ripe banana and there is a corresponding yellow patch in your visual field, the yellowness “of” the patch is, like the banana itself, a representatum, an intentional object of the experience. The experience represents the banana and it represents the *yellowness of the banana*, and the latter yellowness is all the yellowness that is involved; there is no mental patch that is itself yellow. If you were only hallucinating a banana, the unreal banana would still be a representatum, but now an intentional in-existent; and so would be its yellowness. The yellowness would be as it is even though the banana were not real. Likewise, when you experience a yellowy-orange after-image, you visually represent a colored spot in real physical space, and the yellowy-orange is the represented spot’s represented color.

Here is how we evade the Russellian dilemma: Notice that each disjunct assumes that the yellowy-orange “something” is an *actual* thing (else we could not derive the unwanted conclusion that there actually exists a nonphysical yellowy-orange thing). The Representational theory affords a third alternative, by supposing that qualia are *intentional contents* of sensory states, properties of intentional objects, represented properties of representata. Of course it is characteristic of intentional contents that they may or may not actually exist. Your visual system quite often portrays, alleges something yellowy-orange. But, vision being not entirely reliable, on a given occasion the yellowy-orange thing may or may not actually exist.

Suppose Ludwig is seeing a real orange in good light, and it looks yellowy-orange to him. He is visually representing the actual yellowy-orangeness of the orange, and veridically so. But suppose Bertie is experiencing a yellowy-orange after-image as a result of seeing a flash bulb go off. According to the Representational theory, that is for Bertie to be visually-representing a filmy yellowy-orange blob located at such-and-such a spot in the room. The representation has a truth-condition involving yellowy-orangeness.



There visually appears to Ludwig to be a yellowy-orange orange; there visually appears to Bertie to be a yellowy-orange blob. Ludwig's orange is real and so is its yellowy-orangeness, but Bertie's blob is unreal, an intentional nonexistent, and so is its yellowy-orangeness. The yellowy-orangeness is the color of an illusory, nonexistent thing.

If that seems weird to you, think of hallucinating pink rats. Perhaps you know the rats are not real, but they are unquestionably pink. The pinkness is the color of the nonexistent rats. (I take that to be uncontroversial.<sup>6</sup>) Construing intentionality as representation, we can say that the pinkness is the represented color of the represented but nonactual rats, i.e., it is the color they are represented as having.<sup>7</sup>

Nor should it be surprising that Bertie's blob is a nonactual, nonexistent thing. Since in reality there is no yellowy-orange blob in the room with Bertie, his visual experience is unveridical. Remember that after-images are *illusions*; it looks to Bertie as though there is a yellowy-orange blob before him, when there is not anything yellowy-orange before him. Moreover, vision science has an extensively worked out explanation of this particular illusion. It is well understood why it can look to someone as though there is something yellowy-orange even when there is not anything yellowy-orange before that person.

I contend that Russell mistook a nonactual physical individual for an actual nonphysical one.

6. *Homogeneity or grainlessness*: Here I would appeal to the Representational theory of qualia, and point out that vision does not represent smoothly colored physical objects as having gaps in color. It is a further and interesting question whether this is tantamount to vision's representing the objects as having no gaps in color, but in any case there is a kind of illusion here too, either perceptual or cognitive. We are visually unaware of gaps, and so it seems to us that there are no gaps. Logically that is a scope fallacy, but it is one that in perception we commit regularly. (Armstrong (1981a) calls it the "Headless Woman" fallacy, after the well-known stage magicians' illusion: The illusionist presents a woman on a brightly lighted stage and places a closed box over her head. The illusionist then opens the front of the box. Secretly, the woman's head has been covered by a black cloth, so we do not see it. Our seeing no head makes it look to us as if there is none to be seen. It appears that the woman now has no head. As Armstrong says (p. 51): "Out of sight is not simply out of mind. It seems to be out of existence.")

7. *The intrinsic perspectivalness, point-of-view-iness, and/or first-personishness of experience*: I defend an "inner sense" theory of awareness and introspection that I swiped from Armstrong (1968, 1981b). On this view, introspection is much like internal perception, and (like any mode of perception) gives you a unique and partial perspective on what you are perceiving. Indeed, I hold that introspection is the operation of an internal scanner or monitor, that produces representations of your first-order mental states themselves, representations that are made of concepts peculiar to the monitoring device. The blind men

and the elephant are representing the same thing very differently, so differently that they do not, perhaps cannot realize that what they are representing is the same as what each of the other men are representing. Similarly, seeing an event and hearing the same event may be nothing alike. And introspecting what is in fact a neural event is not a bit like seeing that same event as from outside one's head, using mirrors. Your introspective device deploys very distinctive concepts of its own. These features of the introspector combine, I hold, to explain the intrinsic perspectivalness of the mental as such: The mental as such is the neural, not as such, but as viewed from the unique introspective perspective.

If the idea of internal monitors in your brain seems fanciful and/or empirically unmotivated, consider the striking but neglected fact that our introspective attention is under voluntary control. I can ask you to concentrate on your visual field as such, then to focus on a particular patch of phenomenal red, then to shift your attention to the upper left quadrant of the field, then to attend to what you feel in your left elbow, then to ask yourself what you are smelling at the moment, etc., and you can do those things at will, with a remarkable degree of facility and precision. All that activity feels unmistakably like scanning and monitoring rather than just thinking. And surely something cognitive, and presumably something neurophysiological, subserves it.

(For that matter, consider the following simple argument. We distinguish between mental states whose subjects are aware of being in them and those whose subjects are not aware of being in them. The "of" in "aware of" is the "of" of intentionality; what one is aware of is an intentional object of the awareness. But, as is widely granted, intentionality is representation; a state has a thing as its intentional object only if it represents that thing. Therefore, awareness of a mental state is a representation of that state; a state you are aware of being in is a state that is itself represented by another of your own mental states. Thus, something in you, presumably a kind of brain mechanism, has the capacity to represent mental states of yours.)

The "inner sense" theory of awareness and introspection is not immune to objection (Chapter 2 of Lycan (1996) rebuts a number of those), but here let me ward off one that is both pervasive and viciously misguided: It is often complained that such a theory does not in any way explain the qualitative or phenomenal character of experience; a mere higher-order representation could hardly bring a phenomenal property into being. (So how can they claim to be theories of *consciousness*?)

If you have attended to the argument of section 4 above, you will already have anticipated the reply to that objection: The "inner sense" theory makes no claim to have explained anything about qualia or phenomenal character. It is primarily a theory of the distinction between mental states one is aware of being in and mental states one is not aware of being in; and I have used it additionally to explain the intrinsic perspectivalness of the mental as such. But some other theory must be given of qualia or phenomenal properties. (I have nominated the Representational theory for that purpose.)

8. *Funny facts and special phenomenal knowledge*: Here is Jackson's (1982) version of the "Knowledge Argument" mentioned in section 2 above. He offers the now painfully familiar example of Mary, the brilliant color scientist trapped in an entirely black-and-white laboratory. (Even she herself is painted black and white. There are potential complications that would have been avoided had Jackson made Mary temporarily color-blind instead of merely confined to her lab space, but I shall ignore those.) Working through her modem and various black-and-white monitors, she becomes scientifically omniscient as regards the physics and chemistry of color, the neurophysiology of color vision, and every other conceivably relevant scientific fact; we may even suppose that she becomes scientifically omniscient, period. Yet when she is finally released from her captivity and ventures into the outside world, she sees colors themselves for the first time; and she thereby learns something, viz., she learns what it is like to see red and many of the other colors. That is, she learns what it is like to experience subjective or *phenomenal* redness, never mind the actual colors of the physical objects she encounters (which, scientifically, she already knew).

And so she has acquired information that is – by hypothesis – outside the whole domain of science. It is intrinsically subjective phenomenal information, and what she has learned seems to be an intrinsically perspectival *fact*, that eludes all of science. According to materialist theories of mind, no fact about the mind is anything but a neurophysiological or otherwise scientific or "objective" fact; so it would follow that materialism is false.

Actually there is a crucial distinction to be respected here. In Jackson's official formulation, the word "fact" is not used; his conclusion is just that "one can have all the physical information without having all the information there is to have" (p. 472). This, he says, refutes the doctrine he calls "Physicalism" (p. 469): "All (correct) information is physical information." But depending on how one construes the slippery term "information," "Physicalism" in this sense need not be taken to be an ontological claim at all. It is most naturally understood as being about *truths*, rather than about what kinds of things there are. And taken in that way, it is not entailed by materialism about the mind. (Materialism says only that human beings are made entirely of physical matter and that their properties, and facts about them, consist in arrangements of that matter. It hardly follows that every sentence or proposition about a human being *means* something about physical matter.) However—witness his title, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"—Jackson goes on to draw an explicitly ontological conclusion.

Here is a more formal statement of the Knowledge Argument, construed ontologically, as an objection to materialism.

- (1) Before her release, Mary knows all the scientific and other "objective" facts there are to know about color and color vision and color experience, and every other relevant fact. [Stipulation.]
- (2) Upon being released, Mary learns something, viz., she learns what

- it's like (w.i.l.) to experience visual redness. [Seems obvious.]  
 $\therefore$  (3) There is a fact, the fact of w.i.l. to experience visual redness, that Mary knows after her release but did not know prior to it. [1,2]  
 (4) For any facts: if  $F_1 = F_2$ , then anyone who knows  $F_1$  knows  $F_2$ . [Suppressed; assumes simple factive grammar of "know."]  
 $\therefore$  (5) There is a fact, that of w.i.l., that is distinct from every relevant scientific/"objective" fact. [1,3,4]  
 (6) If materialism is true, then every fact about color experience is identical with some physiological, functional, or otherwise scientific/"objective" fact.

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$\therefore$  (7) Materialism is not true. [5,6]

(4) is supplied because without (4), there seems no way to get (5) from (1) and (3).

I reject (4). (4) may at first seem obvious, because it appears to be licensed by Leibniz' Law: If fact  $F_1$  is known to Smith, and  $F_1 = F_2$ , then surely  $F_2$  is known to Smith. But there are clear counterexamples to it: The fact of water splashing just is the moving of lots of  $H_2O$  molecules, but someone can know that water is splashing without knowing anything about  $H_2O$ ; the fact of my being overpaid just is the fact of WGL's being overpaid, but someone (who does not know that I am WGL) can know that WGL is overpaid while having no idea whether I am overpaid.

What has gone wrong? As always and notoriously, Leibniz' Law fails for *representation-dependent* properties. That Oedipus wanted to marry Jocasta but did not want to marry his mother does not show that Jocasta was not his mother; the poor woman was his marriage-object under one description or mode of presentation but not under the other.<sup>8</sup> And *being known to Smith* is a representation-dependent property: Whether Smith knows a given fact depends on how Smith represents that fact. She may know it under one representation but not know it under a different one. That is just what is going on in the "water" and "overpaid" examples. One may see water splashing but lack the chemical perspective entirely; less commonly, a mad chemist might record a motion of  $H_2O$  molecules but be mentally so far removed from the perspective of everyday things and substances that she has no thought of water.

The "overpaid" example is perspectival too, but a different kind of perspective is at work. Someone can know that WGL is overpaid without knowing that I am overpaid, if that person has only a public, (non-auto-)biographical perspective on me and is not in a position to refer to me more directly. Even if the person were to come into the room, point straight at me and exclaim "You are overpaid," I might insist that the knowledge she thereby expresses is still not quite the same knowledge I have when I know that *I myself* am overpaid. (Especially if I believe that she is mistaken as to who I am.) As Hector Castañeda (1966) emphasized so many years ago,<sup>9</sup> if I myself am amnesic I may know many facts about WGL, including that he is overpaid, without knowing that I myself am overpaid; so it seems that what I know when I do know that

I myself am overpaid is a different fact from any of those I could know while amnesic, and an intrinsically perspectival fact. In order to designate the person it is supposed to designate, a mental pronoun can be tokened only from a certain point of view; only I, WGL, can think “I” and thereby designate WGL.

Clearly, *being known to Mary* is a representation-dependent property; whether Mary knows a given fact depends on how she represents that fact. Facts can be differently represented from differing perspectives, and that is why (4) is false. Without (4), the Knowledge Argument collapses.

Now, sometimes philosophers do individuate “facts” in a less chunky, more fine-grained sort of way. The late Roderick Chisholm (1976) used a version of principle (4) itself as a test for sameness of “fact.”<sup>10</sup> In his sense, the water splashing is a different fact from the H<sub>2</sub>O molecules’ moving, odd as it sounds to say that.

I do not think anyone could credibly insist that one of these two ways of counting “facts”—the chunky or the Chisholmian—is *correct* to the exclusion of the other. I offer the following terminological proposal. Let us continue to use the term “fact” in the more usual chunky way, with which we began, and let us call Chisholm-facts “pieces of information.” The latter seems reasonable because Chisholm thinks of the things epistemically, as objects of conceptual knowledge rather than as chunks of the world. Thus, the fact of water splashing just is the moving of lots of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, but that water is splashing and that H<sub>2</sub>O molecules are moving are two different pieces of information. Likewise, according to the materialist, that such-and-such neural goings-on are taking place in a subject’s brain and that it is like so-and-so for the subject to have an experience are the same fact but different pieces of information.

Once this distinction is introduced, my objection to the Knowledge Argument may seem to have been blunted, for (by definition) (4) remains true at least of “facts” in the fine-grained sense, i.e., of pieces of information. Has Jackson not then proven that there is *information* that is not public, objective, scientific etc. information?

I say he has: Just plug in “piece of information” for “fact” in our official statement of Jackson’s argument, and I believe (*pace* those philosophers who simply deny (2) and those who resist the inference from (2) to (3)), that the resulting argument succeeds.

The existence of nonphysical, subjective, intrinsically perspectival etc. *information* may or may not be of metaphysical interest. But for purposes of philosophy of mind, here are two key ways in which it is not interesting: (i) The phenomenon is not specifically about the mind; it is everywhere. No amount of chemistry contains the information that *water* is splashing. No amount of economic etc. information contains the information that *I* am overpaid. And so forth. And/but (ii) it does not follow in any of these cases that the object or stuff in question – water, or WGL – has a nonphysical or immaterial *property*. I believe Jackson tacitly makes this inference, from nonphysical (piece of) information to nonphysical property, and so commits a fallacy; otherwise, he has no argument for the existence of epiphenomenal qualia.

So: I believe that there is special phenomenal knowledge. Mary learns a new fact, the fact of what it is (actually) like to see red. On my view, the sense in which this is a new fact is that fine-grained sense according to which “facts” are pieces of information that incorporate modes of presentation, or concepts under which the relevant chunks of spacetime are represented: thus, in this sense, that water is splashing and that H<sub>2</sub>O molecules are moving in such-and-such a way are different “facts,” though in a more obvious coarse-grained sense they are one and the same fact. In the fine-grained sense, that I weigh 200 pounds and that WGL does are different facts; that the meeting begins at noon and that it begins five minutes from now are different facts; etc. In none of these cases is there any threat to the materialist view of human beings, but only different perspectives on the same chunk of spacetime. So too, when Mary learns that it is like... *this* [however she might classify the experience to herself] to see red, she is representing the qualitative character of the experience from the introspective perspective using an introspective concept, thereby generating a new finely-individuated fact, even though the spacetime chunk she is representing from that highly distinctive point of view is itself scientifically and naturalistically unremarkable.

9. *The ineffability of “what it’s like”*: This problem too succumbs to the perspectivalist account I have been sketching. When Mary represents the qualitative character of the experience of red, or yellowy-orange, from the introspective perspective she mobilizes an introspective concept, one that is proprietary to her introspector and (for a reason I cannot go into here) does not translate into English or any other natural language. Of course, the *coarse-grained* fact that is being reported by her introspector can be expressed and described in many ways, corresponding to many different fine-grained “facts”; it is only the fine-grained piece of information incorporating the special introspective concept that has no natural-language translation.

10. *The “explanatory gap”*: I agree that the Gap is real. But this is for two reasons, neither of which embarrasses materialism. First, as I have said, phenomenal information and facts of “what it’s like” are ineffable. But one cannot explain what one cannot express in the first place. (The existence of ineffable facts is no embarrassment to science or to materialism, so long as they are fine-grained “facts,” incorporating modes of presentation. It is the modes that make them ineffable, not the underlying coarse-grained fact.) Second, the Gap is not confined to consciousness in any sense or even to mind; there are many kinds of intrinsically perspectival (fine-grained) facts that cannot be explained. Pronominal modes of presentation again serve as a good example. Suppose an ophthalmologist explains why WGL is nearsighted. That does nothing to explain why *I* am nearsighted; nor could anyone or anything explain that—unless, of course, one *first* conceded the identity of me with WGL.

11. Of course I do not expect anyone (yet) to be convinced of my solu-

tions to the six problems of phenomenal experience, when all I have offered are cryptic summaries of them and without a hint of argument. (I do hope you will be moved to go out and buy my books, preferably in hardcover.) But my solutions *are solutions*, in the sense that if correct they would solve the respective problems. I believe each one is correct. I may be wrong in one or more cases or even in all. But remember that the most difficult problems of phenomenal experience are expressed as “how possibly” questions (“How could a purely physical organism be directly acquainted with qualia?”; “How could materialism permit the existence of intrinsically perspectival, ineffable facts?”). A “*here’s how possibly*” answer must be treated with respect unless and until it is refuted.

Of course, the solutions must be mutually consistent, as (so far as I can see) mine are. But I hope I have gone some way toward persuading you that each of the problems becomes more tractable once it has been carefully distinguished from the others.

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## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was originally entitled “Cognitive Theories of Consciousness.” Thanks to Martin Davies and to Manuel Liz for their excellent comments on it at the ICCS 99 conference, Donostia, Spain, May, 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> This theme has also been emphasized, and well documented, by Block (1995) and by Chalmers (1996).  
Baars (1995) rejoins against Block that “[w]hether consciousness is a ‘mongrel problem’ or purebred is an empirical question” (p. 249). He gives the example of cancer, which for a time was considered a false natural kind but, he says, is now again regarded as “the same underlying dysfunction, expressed by different pathways and in different tissues” (p. 249). True or not, this squarely misses the point: Different senses of “consciousness” may be found empirically to have the same referent, but that would be—just that—an empirical discovery, not something to be simply assumed or even to be established by a priori argument.
- <sup>3</sup> For a wonderful discussion of the temporal anomalies, see Chs. 5 and 6 of Dennett (1991).
- <sup>4</sup> See also Block (1993) and Goldman (1993).
- <sup>5</sup> Lycan (1987), (1996). I will not rehearse any of the arguments for the positions, but you may take my word for it that they are decisive.
- <sup>6</sup> The *metaphysics* of nonexistence is of course another matter. Another reason that the Representational theory may seem weird is that one cannot go into the metaphysics of nonexistence without getting weird. But that is everyone’s problem, not the Representational theory’s in particular. For our purposes here, just remind yourself that of course, in some sense, there are things that do not exist, and plug in your own favorite account of the nonactual. (My own view of the nonactual is defended in Lycan (1994).)
- <sup>7</sup> A surprising but harmless consequence of this view is that qualia are not themselves properties of the experiences that present them: Qualia are represented properties of represented objects, and so they are only intentionally present in experiences. As before, the relevant properties of the experiences are, representing this quality or that.
- <sup>8</sup> I here ignore two complications: that some theorists insist that a “representation-dependent property” is no genuine property at all, and that Leibniz’ Law does hold for properties incorporating representations when the representations are *de re*.

<sup>9</sup> Following Geach (1957); see also Perry (1979).

<sup>10</sup> Chisholm himself preferred to speak of *states of affairs*; for him, a fact is a state of affairs that (actually) obtains.