Original Paper UDC 130.1:165.242
130.1:53.01
Received April 12th, 2011

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Thinking about Phenomenal Concepts*

Abstract

Frank Jackson's knowledge argument *and different conceivability arguments, advanced by Saul Kripke, David Chalmers and Joseph Levine, conclude that consciousness involves non-physical properties or properties that cannot be reductively accounted for in physical terms. Some physicalists have replied to these objections by means of different versions of the* phenomenal concept strategy. *David Chalmers has responded with the* master argument*, a reasoning that, if successful, would undermine any reasonable version of the phenomenal concept strategy. In this paper, I argue that the master argument does not advance the debate between the supporters of the anti-physicalist arguments and those of the phenomenal concept strategy.*

Key words

consciousness, *qualia*, zombies, a posteriori physicalism, phenomenal concept strategy, David Chalmers's master argument

1. Introduction

It is a highly debated philosophical issue whether or not consciousness can be accommodated in the physical world that is described and explained by natural sciences. In particular, philosophers debate whether *qualia* have a place in a fundamental *physical* domain or in other domains that can be *based upon* or *unified with* it. Minimally, *qualia* can be taken to be properties that have to do with ways of appearing in conscious experiences, such as the blueness of the sky, the redness of a rose, and the painfulness of a pain. Moreover, *qualia* are taken to ground differences between types of conscious experiences: a colour experience of red is different from that of blue or a pain in the elbow because different qualia determine different ways of appearing in these conscious experiences. Some supporters of physicalism admit the existence of qualia, at least in the sense considered above, and maintain that they are identical to physical properties or to properties that depend on physical properties.[1]

* I am grateful to David Chalmers for reading and discussing with generosity and patience previous versions of my criticism. I would like to thank also Mario Alai for helpful comments on a previous draft. I presented parts and versions of this paper at the conferences *Um i stvarnost*, Institut za Filozofiju, Zagreb, 2009; *The Philosophical Significance of Attention*, IUC, Dubrovnik, 2009; *Ontologia e conoscenza*, University of Siena, Arezzo, 2010; *Mind and World*, Rijeka 2011, and at departmental talks in Belgrade (November 2009) and Hull (March 2010). I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me or accepting my submissions and the audiences for helpful discussions.

[1] Physicalists have spelled out this notion of dependence differently, for a critical survey see Stoljar 2010.

Certain related objections to these identifications, if cogent, would undermine the different versions of physicalism. Prominent amongst these criticisms are the knowledge argument and a family of conceivability arguments.[2] A common feature of all these reasonings is that they elicit and then articulate some intuitions concerning a conceptual distinction between qualia and physical properties or properties depending on these latter properties. These arguments are then aimed at deriving *explanatory* or *ontological gaps* between qualia and physical properties that should undermine physicalism.

Some physicalists, known as *a posteriori*, *new wave*, or *B-type* physicalists, concede to their opponents some of their intuitions. However, they deny that these intuitions lead to the anti-physicalist conclusion. Their main resource is what is known as the *phenomenal concept strategy*.[3] According to upholders of this strategy, the antiphysicalist objections considered above result from "cognitive illusions" determined by certain features of *phenomenal concepts*. These are concepts that, allegedly, we use to think about qualia from the first-person perspective. Thus, for instance, if we think about how the colour of the sky appears to us when we have a conscious experience of it, we are employing a phenomenal concept referring to the quale of the conscious colour experience.

The phenomenal concept strategy requires that phenomenal concepts satisfy numerous conditions. These requirements have emerged in dealing with specific aspects of the different antiphysicalist objections mentioned above. Thus, the prospects of the phenomenal concept strategy are tied to those of a theory of phenomenal concepts that can explain independently these requirements. Surely, *a posteriori* physicalists have offered elaborated accounts of phenomenal concepts aimed at supporting the phenomenal concept strategy and showing that it is more than an *ad hoc* manoeuvre.[4]

However, David Chalmers has recently advanced, in the form of a dilemma, a *master argument* for the conclusion that the phenomenal concepts strategy is doomed to failure, no matter which account of phenomenal concepts the *a posteriori* physicalist might provide.[5] The conclusion of the first horn of this dilemma is that phenomenal concepts cannot account for our epistemic situation in relation to qualia when we think about them from the first-person perspective. The conclusion of the second horn of Chalmers's dilemma is that phenomenal concepts cannot be accounted for in terms of properties in the fundamental *physical* domain or in other domains that can be *based on* or *unified with* or *necessitated by* these physical properties. Both conclusions are clearly unpalatable for the physicalist who endorses the phenomenal concept strategy.

I will argue that the phenomenal concepts strategy can stand this criticism. In fact, I will offer another dilemma against Chalmers's master argument that shows that his reasoning cannot advance the debate between the *a posteriori* physicalist and the anti-physicalist. However, even if my reply is successful, it is based on a general and schematic understanding of the phenomenal concept strategy that is required by the specific objection mounted by Chalmers. Whether or not the physicalist can offer an adequate account of phenomenal concepts that can satisfy all the requirements needed for the formulation of the phenomenal concept strategy is an issue that is not tackled here.

I will proceed as follows. Firstly, I briefly illustrate the anti-physicalist arguments and the responses offered by the supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy. This illustration, thus, involves an account of the requirements put on phenomenal concepts in order to defend physicalism. Secondly, in section

3, I describe Chalmers's master argument. In section 4, I argue that Chalmers's dilemma is not undermined by an accusation of equivocation moved by some supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy. Finally, in section 5, I advance my dilemma against Chalmers's.

2. The phenomenal concept strategy

In this section, I illustrate briefly the antiphysicalist arguments and the explanatory desiderata that the phenomenal concept strategy puts on phenomenal concepts in order to block these objections. Some abbreviations will be helpful in this illustration and in the remainder of this paper. Let us assume that *P* describes the complete microphysical truth of the world. Thus, *P* is an extremely long conjunction of sentences that specify in details all the fundamental microphysical properties of every microphysical entity across time and space. In addition, let us use *Q* as a true statement concerning a fact involving qualia. For instance, *Q* might state that a certain conscious experience has a certain quale.

Frank Jackson's knowledge argument against physicalism goes as follows. Mary is a super scientist who knows *P*. Thus, in particular she knows all the physical facts about colour and colour vision. However, she has gathered this knowledge without having any conscious colour experience, given that she is confined from birth in a black and white environment. Freed from this environment, she sees for the first time a coloured object; let us say a red rose. According to the supporters of the knowledge argument, by seeing the rose, Mary discovers the quale of the conscious experience of red. Thus, she discovers the fact *Q* that her conscious experience has a certain quale.[6] Given that she already knew all the physical facts concerning her conscious colour experience, *Q* cannot be a physical fact and the quale of her experience cannot be a physical property.

The physicalist that supports the phenomenal concept strategy concedes that Mary learns something. So, he is not endorsing *a priori* physicalism, the view that facts about qualia would be *a priori* entailed by complete physical story *P* and, thus, that Mary will know everything about these properties before her release.[7] Moreover, the supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy assume that Mary acquires new beliefs concerning qualia. This further concession to the supporter of the knowledge argument contrasts with certain "deflationist" views of Mary's new knowledge. According to the supporters of these latter accounts, Mary's new knowledge is not propositional knowledge.[8] However, the supporter of the phenomenal concept strategy maintains that conceding

2
For the knowledge argument, see Jackson 1982 and Jackson 1986. Jackson no longer endorses this argument, see Jackson 2007. Influential versions of conceivability arguments have been offered in Kripke 1971, Chalmers 1996, and Levine 2001.

3
Amongst recent proposals, see Carruthers 2000, Papineau 2002, Perry 2001, and Tye 2000, although Tye has recanted in Tye 2009.

4
For a discussion of these conditions, see Malatesti 2008.

5
Chalmers 2007.

6
Or whichever other fact that is taken to be problematic for physicalism.

7
This view is advanced, for instance, in Dennett 2007.

8
See, for instance, Lewis 1990.

that Mary acquires propositional knowledge does not imply that qualia are not physical properties.

According to the supporter of the phenomenal concept strategy, the individuation of Mary's beliefs is a function of the individuation of concepts occurring in them. In turn, the individuation of concepts is a function, besides of their referent, of their cognitive content. And finally, distinct concepts can co-refer. So, when Mary sees a coloured object, she acquires phenomenal concepts that co-refer with her scientific concepts that concern qualia. Thus, this reply to the knowledge argument requires that Mary's new beliefs involve phenomenal concepts that are *a priori* detached from physical concepts. Moreover, these concepts to be possessed require having a relevant type of experience. Finally, her phenomenal concepts refer to physical properties.

The phenomenal concept strategy is also used to resist conceivability arguments against physicalism. Saul Kripke advanced seminal versions of these objections.[9] More recently, David Chalmers, Frank Jackson, and Joseph Levine have developed theirs.[10] These reasonings are based on the conceivability of the instantiation of *P* without that of *Q*. An illustration of this assumption is given by the case of philosophical *zombies*. These are hypothetical creatures that lack consciousness and share with us the properties that, according to the different versions of physicalism, should describe and explain consciousness. Thus, there is at least a *conceptual gap* between the physical story *P* and qualia.

Conceivability arguments against physicalism come in an ontological and an epistemic form. The ontological versions of the conceivability argument supported by Kripke, Chalmers and Jackson, concludes that the conceivability of zombies implies an *ontological gap*. In fact, these arguments are aimed at proving that the conceivability of zombies implies the modal conclusion that it is metaphysically possible that *P* is true and *Q* is false. This conclusion is then taken to be damaging to physicalism because physicalists would admit that *P* should imply *Q* as a matter of metaphysical necessity.[11]

The supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy have offered replies to these arguments by exploiting phenomenal concepts. They maintain that zombies are conceivable in virtue of certain features of these concepts. However, this does not imply that it is metaphysically possible that qualia are not physical properties. To show this, they have offered several alternative accounts of the relevant features of phenomenal concepts.[12] Without entering into details here, it is enough to say that they aim at accounting for the fact that phenomenal concepts offer peculiar modes of thinking about qualia. These features are then taken to explain why, although phenomenal concepts are *a priori* detached from the relevant physical concepts, it is metaphysically impossible that their referents are not physical.

Finally, in the epistemic version of the conceivability argument, the conceptual gap illustrated by zombies is taken to lead to an *explanatory gap* that separates *Q* from *P* in a way that undermines physicalism.[13] In particular, the conceivability of zombies supports an intuition concerning the arbitrariness of the psychophysical identities concerning qualia. Despite we might be convinced that a quale is a certain physical property *N*, it would still appear to be arbitrary why this is so. There might be a persistent intuition that *N* could not have been that quale. Let us assume for instance that the physicalists maintain that the characteristic way in which we are aware of a toothache is identical to the activation of a certain group of neurons. According to some supporter of the epistemic gap, it would still be possible to wonder why that specific neural activation is that pain (and vice versa). However, such an intuition is

not prompted in the case of other informative or explanatory identities. Once we know that Tully = Cicero, there is no similar explanatory gap left.

Therefore, some supporters of phenomenal concept strategy maintain that phenomenal concepts, besides being *a priori* detached from scientific concepts, involve a special relation to their referents. This relation explains the intuition of distinctness that differentiates the identities of qualia with physical properties from other *a posteriori* identities.

There are also desiderata that the theory of phenomenal concepts has to satisfy. Trivially, this theory should sit well within a general theory of concepts and their cognitive significance. Clearly, this is not a small requirement, given the lack of general agreement on the nature of concepts. However, another requirement, that can be called the *physicalist constraint,* is more important for the present discussion. The account of phenomenal concepts, in order to back the phenomenal concept strategy, should postulate neither ontologically irreducible mental entities nor entities that cannot be reductively explained by physical entities. The majority of physicalists, in fact, would assume that their doctrine extend well further qualia and involve all our mental life. So, the phenomenal concept strategy cannot involve mental entities that escape the physical ontology and reductive explanations. Otherwise, whatever the utility of this response in blocking certain anti-physicalist arguments concerning consciousness, it would introduce phenomenal concepts or their features as new embarrassing entities for the *a posteriori* physicalist.

The elaboration of different physicalist accounts of phenomenal concepts aimed at satisfying the desiderata of the phenomenal concept strategy represent an interesting development in the debate on the place of qualia in the natural world.[14] However, David Chalmers has offered an objection of such a generality and strength that, if sound, would undermine any possible version of this strategy.

3. David Chalmers's master argument

Chalmers targets the consistency of a set of assumptions endorsed by the supporters of the phenomenal concepts strategy. As we have seen, they accept that zombies are conceivable. In addition, they maintain that certain features of phenomenal and scientific concepts explain the conceivability of zombies without making reference to or implying the existence of non-physical prop-

9
Kripke 1971.

10
Chalmers 1996, Jackson 1994a, Jackson 1998 and Levine 2001.

11
The conclusion that physicalists should accept that psychophysical identifications are necessary was part of Kripke's conceivability arguments targeted against the early identity theorists of the 1950s, such as J. J. C. Smart and U. T. Place, who maintained that these identifications were contingent. Nowadays, many physicalists accept that what they take to be the fundamental relation between the physical and the mental is metaphysically necessary, see Papineau 2002, pp. 75–76.

12
Phenomenal concepts are taken to be: recognitional concepts, in Loar 1990 and Carruthers 2004; concepts that play very distinct conceptual roles from physical concepts because are associated to very different mental faculties, in Hill 1997 and Hill and McLaughlin B. 1999; indexical concepts involving a demonstrative reference to physical properties, in Perry 2001 and Ismael 1999; quotational concepts that include their referents, in Papineau 2002.

13
Levine 2001.

14
For a collection of the most significant accounts, see Alter and Walter 2007.

erties of conscious experiences. Finally, as required by the physicalist constraint, this explanation should be given in physical terms.

Chalmers invites us to consider *C,* the relevant psychological or semantic story that the supporter of the phenomenal concept strategy should be able to offer to account for phenomenal concepts. Thus, *C* has to be an account that concerns physical, functional, intentional and epistemic properties that plausibly explains all the mental or semantic features required by the phenomenal concept strategy to block the different anti-physicalist arguments.

Chalmers advances his dilemma by considering whether or not is conceivable that *P* and *C* obtain together. So, one option is that we can conceive that *P* can hold without *C*, so (*P* and not *C*) is conceivable. Alternatively, (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable. According to Chalmers, these two possibilities lead to two horns of a dilemma for the supporter of the phenomenal concept strategy. Let us consider the first horn.

Chalmers argues that if (*P* and not *C*) is conceivable, then *C* is not physically explicable. This would mean that the account *C* of phenomenal concepts involves facts or properties that escape the explanatory resources admitted by the physicalist. Thus, we would get an *explanatory gap* between the physical processes and the relevant features of phenomenal concepts exploited by the phenomenal concept strategy. Chalmers's argument relies here on the assumption that physicalists should be committed to the idea that if *P* can reductively explain *C*, then it should be "transparent" why *C* obtains when *P* obtains.[15] This view of reductive explanation can be illustrated with the case of water. The concept of water can be analysed *a priori* as referring to whatever is the clear, odourless liquid around here that fills the oceans and lakes etc. Let us abbreviate this by saying that water is the *waterish stuff*. The reductive explanation of facts concerning water in terms of low-level truths concerning H_2O is "made transparent" by the fact that from *P* we would be able *a priori* to determine that H_2O satisfies the properties of *waterish stuff*.

On the other horn of Chalmers's dilemma, if (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable, then *C* does not explain our epistemic situation with regard to consciousness. By "epistemic situation of an individual" Chalmers means all the truth-values, justification, and cognitive significance of the beliefs of the subject. According to Chalmers, if (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable, then *P* and *C* has to be conceivable. However, he thinks that this would imply that zombies, being our physical duplicates, satisfy *C*, and thus that they would have the epistemic situation with relation to qualia that involves also the use of phenomenal concepts. But, zombies do not share our epistemic situation in relation to qualia, in fact by hypothesis they lack these features. If zombies satisfy *C* and do not share our epistemic situation, then *C* cannot characterise how we think from the first-personal perspective about qualia. Thus, Chalmers concludes that *C* would not deliver an account of phenomenal concepts. Let us now consider an attempt at undermining this dilemma.

4. A charge of equivocation

It has been argued that Chalmers's dilemma is based on an equivocation in the use of the description *C*.[16] This equivocation is revealed by using what could be called the "the concept of phenomenal concept strategy". According to this response, there are two ways of thinking about phenomenal concepts that determine two corresponding ways of thinking the story *C*. These two ways of thinking are tied up, respectively, to first-personal concepts and third-personal concepts used to think about the phenomenal concepts involved in *C*.

To illustrate these two ways of thinking let us introduce a convention. Phenomenal concepts will be indicated with letters in bold while the qualia to which they refer with letters in italics. So, with **B** we refer to a phenomenal concept and with *B* to a quale to which the phenomenal concept indicated with **B** refers. With the *first-personal mode of presentation* of phenomenal concepts, a certain subject thinks about concept **B** as the phenomenal concept of quale *B,* and she thinks about this quale *B* by *using* the phenomenal concept **B**. On the other hand, with the *third-personal mode of presentation* of phenomenal concepts, the subject thinks about **B** as the phenomenal concept referring to *B,* and she is thinking about *B* by using some physical concept **N**.

According to the supporters of the charge of equivocation, the first horn of Chalmers's dilemma, that is based on the assumption that (*P* and not *C*) is conceivable, goes through because we think about *C* using first-personal modes of presentation of phenomenal concepts. In fact, phenomenal concepts such as **B** cannot be derived by physical descriptions, and thus we can conceive of the instantiation of *P* without property *B*, similarly the non-derivability of concept **B** will imply the non-derivability of *C* from *P*, and thus the fact that (*P* and not *C*) is conceivable. In the second horn, based on the assumption that (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable, *C* involves third-personal modes of presentation of phenomenal concepts. In this case, it should not be surprising that we cannot conceive the separation between *P* and *C*; in fact *C* is a physical story and thus has to be part of story *P*.

The charge of equivocation is not a decisive one. Chalmers's dilemma can be reformulated as a *new dilemma* by taking into account the first and third-personal mode of presentation of *C* based, respectively, on the first-personal and third-personal modes of presentation of phenomenal concepts considered above. So, the disjunction of the new dilemma would be that *C* can have a first-personal or a third-personal reading. If we have the first-personal reading of *C*, then the conclusion of the first horn of Chalmers's master argument follows. If we have a third-personal reading of *C*, then the conclusion of the second horn will follow.

Some defenders of the phenomenal concept strategy have tried to dismantle this new dilemma.[17] However, the accusation of equivocation appears to ignore a central requirement that Chalmers puts on the formulation of the account of phenomenal concepts *C*. He explicitly requires that such an account has to be "topic neutral", meaning that it cannot involve explicit reference to phenomenal properties or states and phenomenal concepts that refer to them. In particular, phenomenal concepts cannot be used in articulating *C*. Thus, *C* cannot involve ways of thinking about qualia offered by using phenomenal concepts. Instead, *C* has to be an account of physical, functional, intentional and epistemic properties thought of as such.

Some supporters of the phenomenal concepts strategy have objected to this requirement of "topic-neutrality".[18] Without engaging with this response,

15
This account of reductive explanation is given in Chalmers 2006, and also in Jackson 1994b. See, for objections, Block and Stalnaker 1999 and the replies in Chalmers and Jackson 2001.

16
Papineau 2007, Carruthers and Veillet 2007, and Balog 2012.

17
Carruthers and Veillet 2007 and Papineau 2007.

18
See Balog 2012.

here it is enough to note that Chalmers's requirement appears, at least *prima facie*, to be reasonable insofar as it would undermine immediate rebuttals of the first horn of his dilemma. Moreover, it is a plausible assumption that the physicalist should be committed to articulating *C* without mentioning or thinking about qualia as understood by using phenomenal concepts. Finally, in the next section I offer a criticism of Chalmers's dilemma that, although it exploits different ways of thinking about phenomenal concepts, does not violate the requirement of the "topic neutrality" of *C*.

5. A dilemma against Chalmers's master argument

A counter-dilemma can be mounted against Chalmers's dilemma by considering whether or not he can concede that the phenomenal concept strategy is successful in blocking the conceivability arguments against physicalism. The first horn is simply that if Chalmers does not concede that the phenomenal concept strategy blocks the conceivability arguments, then there would be no need of his master argument. The debate would then concern whether or not phenomenal concepts can be used by physicalist to block these objections.

On the other horn, if Chalmers concedes the efficacy of the phenomenal concept strategy, then it seems that there is a way out his dilemma. Conceding that the phenomenal concept strategy blocks the conceivability arguments based on zombies, offers a mode of presentation of *C.* This way of thinking can be called an *explanatory mode of presentation,* from now on indicated as *EMP.* The *EMP* enables us to think about *C* as concerning: the psychological, intentional, epistemic features in virtue of which a physical property *N* is given to a subject *in a way* that offers to her grounds for conceiving that *N* is not given in the *same way* to her physical duplicate.

In fact, if the phenomenal concept strategy works, someone who endorses it can be aware that her conceiving a difference between her and zombies is due to some of her psychological workings or certain epistemic or semantic features.

The *EMP* is "topic neutral" as required by Chalmers. In this description phenomenal concepts are not explicitly attributed. Instead, *C* involves whatever features the supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy assume will play a central role in explaining the conceivability of zombies, despite the facts that they are metaphysically impossible and that qualia are reductively explainable in physical terms. In particular, *C* would explain why we can conceive that there is a difference between us and the zombies, although they are our physical duplicates. In addition, this way of thinking about *C* does not involve the use of phenomenal concepts. This last point can be emphasised by considering the fact that it is conceivable a physically omniscient being who does not satisfy *C,* and thus cannot conceive zombies. It seems that this creature would be able to use *C* to explain our idiosyncratic capacity to conceive zombies.

Let us now think about Chalmers's master argument with the *EMP* in place. The physicalist should be committed to the claim that (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable. In fact, under the *EMP*, *C* contains a story that would explain why we find conceivable that zombies differ from us. From knowing *P,* we would then be able to grasp *a priori* how physical properties would fulfil this explanatory role involved in *C*. Thus, the supporter of the phenomenal concepts strategy should accept the assumption that the entailment of *C* from *P* would be accessible *a priori*.

According to Chalmers, if the supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy maintain that (*P* and not *C*) is not conceivable and, thus, that (*P* and *C*) is conceivable, they should conclude that, given a zombie *Z*, (*Z* and *C*) is conceivable. The argument for this conclusion can be spelled out as follows:

(1) (*P* without *Q*) is conceivable (i.e. zombies are conceivable).

(2) (*P* entails *C*) is *a priori.*

Therefore:

(3) (*P* and *C* without *Q*) is conceivable (i.e. zombies that satisfy *C* are conceivable).

The supporters of the phenomenal concept strategy endorse both premises. So, they should also accept that zombies satisfy *C*. According to Chalmers, this would be problematic for them. If it is conceivable that we share *C* with zombies, *C* would not be suitable to account for our epistemic situation in relation to qualia.

Supporters of the phenomenal concepts strategy might take issue with Chalmers's demand that *C* should provide an account of our epistemic situation.[19] However, it seems that we can avoid entering into this dispute, given that a conceiver in ideal conditions would not be able to infer the above conclusion (3) from premises (1) and (2). To see why this is the case, let us consider the modes of presentations involved in these premises.

Premises (1) and (2) are based on different modes of presentation of a physical property *N*. According to the supporter of the phenomenal concepts strategy, premise (1) is conceivable by a thinker that satisfies *C* and thus thinks about a certain physical property *N*, that is the quale that enters in fact *Q*, in a way that offers her ground for thinking that a zombie does not have this property. Thus, premise (1) is true by thinking about certain physical properties, i.e. qualia, with the way of thinking made available to a thinker by instantiating *C*. Premise (2), as we have seen, should be accepted by thinking about *C* via the *EMP*. Amongst other things, the *EMP* involves a mode of presentation of *N* thought of as a physical property that, in virtue of being given to us in a certain way, we conceive as not instantiated in zombies. Story *C* is entailed *a priori* from the physical story *P*, because in thinking about it with the *EMP,* amongst other things, we think about qualia, and thus in particular about the property *N* that enters in *Q*, as physical properties.

In general, an argument of this type, with different modes of presentations of the same entity in its premises, might be valid.[20] However, the premises of the argument for conclusion (3) involve two modes of presentations of the same property that a conceiver, in an ideal reflective position, would *a priori* find out to be incompatible. The conceiver who masters the two modes of presentations involved in premise (1) and (2) would be incapable to draw conclusion (3), because he would realise that he cannot conceive that (*P* and *C* without *Q*) by employing phenomenal concepts and the *EMP* in one single act of conceiving. In fact, this would amount to conceiving a zombie that satisfies a psychological story *C*. But *C* is a story that, thanks to the *EMP*, the conceiver thinks about as what explains the fact that a physical property *N* is given to

19 See Díaz-León 2010.

20 Consider for instance, that someone conceives that Clark Kent does not have the properties of Superman and that knows that if someone has all the properties of Superman he then can fly. Of course, this conceiver would infer that it is conceivable that someone has the properties of Superman, he can fly, and he is not Clark Kent.

him in a way that offers him grounds for conceiving that *N* is not given in the same way to the zombie. Thus *C*, thought of by means of the *EMP*, if applied to zombies would undermine the ground initially offered by phenomenal concepts for conceiving them. In fact, this would amount to conceiving that zombies do not differ from the conceiver, given that they would share with him the physical property *N*, given that they are his physical duplicates, and have the same perspective on *N*, that is conferred by instantiating *C*.

An analogy might help to clarify this point. A person *A,* who sees a certain object *O*, might conceive that a certain other individual *B* sees the same *O* differently. Let us now assume that *A* is capable of thinking about the overall perspective that characterises how she sees *O*, let us call it *V*, when she conceives that *B* sees *O* differently from her. Individual *A* cannot then conceive, from an ideal reflective position, that *B* sees *O* differently and that *B* has the perspective *V.* In fact, by ascribing *V* to *B, A* would not be able to conceive that *B* could see, at the same time, the object *O* differently from her.

To recapitulate, the supporter of the phenomenal concepts strategy can maintain that we are in the position to separately conceive that (*P* without *Q*), in virtue of instantiating *C,* and access *a priori* that (*P* entails C), thanks to the *EMP*. However, the conjunction (*P* and *C* without *Q*) cannot be conceived by using these modes of presentation. Thus, if it is conceded that the phenomenal concept strategy blocks the conceivability arguments based on zombies, the supporters of this strategy should then embrace safely the premise of the second horn of Chalmers's dilemma.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that Chalmers's dilemma cannot advance the debate with the *a posteriori* physicalists. If they meet the challenge created by the conceivability of zombies to the project of accommodating qualia in the physical world, they should also be able to accommodate phenomenal concepts. However, clearly, two central issues are left open.

First, I have not proved that the *a posteriori* physicalist can meet the challenge posed by the conceivability arguments. Secondly, my reply to the quite abstract challenge advanced by Chalmers to any version of the phenomenal concept strategy trades on the, almost empty, idea that by possessing a phenomenal concept a physical property is "given to a subject in a certain way". This is the way that constitutes the ground for intuitions that generate certain assumptions for several dualist arguments, but that cannot provide support for their conclusions. However, it remains to be seen whether the *a posteriori* physicalist can spell out this idea satisfactorily.

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Luca Malatesti

Misliti o fenomenalnim pojmovima

Sažetak

Argument znanja *Francka Jacksona i razni argumenti zamislivosti, koje zagovaraju Saul Kripke, David Chalmers i Joseph Levine, zaključuju da svijest uključuje ne-fizikalna svojstva ili svojstva koje se ne mogu redukcionistički objasniti fizikalnim terminima. Neki fizikalisti su pružili odgovor na ove prigovore pomoću raznih verzija* strategije fenomenalnih pojmova. *David Chalmers je odgovorio s* glavnim argumentom*, zaključivanjem koje bi, ako je uspješno, potkopalo bilo koju razložnu verziju strategije fenomenalnih pojmova. U ovom radu tvrdim da glavni argument ne pridonosi raspravi između zagovaratelja anti-fizikalističkih argumenata i zastupnika strategije fenomenalnih pojmova.*

Ključne riječi

svijest, *qualia*, zombiji, a posteriori fizikalizam, strategija fenomenalnih pojmova, glavni argument Davida Chalmersa

Luca Malatesti

Denken über phänomenale Begriffe

Zusammenfassung

Frank Jacksons Wissensargument *sowie diverse Argumente der Vorstellbarkeit – vorgebracht seitens Saul Kripke, David Chalmers und Joseph Levine – schlussfolgern, das Bewusstsein schließe nichtphysikalische Wesenszüge ein bzw. jene, die sich reduktionistisch vermöge der physikalischen Termini nicht erklären lassen. Die einen und die anderen Physikalisten respondierten auf diese Einwendungen unter Zuhilfenahme von verschiedenartigen Versionen der* Strategie der phänomenalen Begriffe*. David Chalmers antwortete mit dem* Hauptargument*, einer Begründung, die, falls erfolgreich, eine jede vernünftige Version der Strategie der phänomenalen Begriffe untergraben würde. In diesem Paper erachte ich, das Hauptargument fördere keine Debatte zwischen den Anhängern der antiphysikalistischen Argumente und denjenigen der Strategie der phänomenalen Begriffe.*

Schlüsselwörter

Bewusstsein, *Qualia*, Zombies, A-posteriori-Physikalismus, Strategie der phänomenalen Begriffe, David Chalmers' Hauptargument

Luca Malatesti

Réfléchir sur les concepts phénoménaux

Résumé

L'argument de la connaissance *de Frank Jackson ainsi que les différents arguments de la concevabilité, avancés par Saul Kripke, David Chalmers et Joseph Levine, concluent que la conscience implique des propriétés non-physiques ou des propriétés ne pouvant être expliquées en termes physiques. Certains physicalistes ont répondu à ces objections au moyen de différentes versions de la* stratégie des concepts phénoménaux*. David Chalmers a répliqué par le* maître argument*, un raisonnement qui, en cas de réussite, saperait toute version raisonnable de la stratégie des concepts phénoménaux. Dans cet article, j'affirme que le maître argument n'avance pas le débat entre les partisans des arguments anti-physicalistes et ceux de la stratégie des concepts phénoménaux.*

Mots-clés

Conscience, *qualia*, zombies, physicalisme a posteriori, stratégie des concepts phénoménaux, maître argument de David Chalmers