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**Reconceiving the Conceivability
Argument for Dualism in the Philosophy of Mind**

Abstract

In the philosophical literature on consciousness and the mind-body problem, the conceivability argument against physicalism is usually taken to support a form of dualism between physicality and phenomenality. Usually, the discussion focuses on the qualitative character of experience, which is what the phenomenal feel of a given experience is like. By contrast, the subjective character of experience, or its individuation to a given first-person subject, tends to be set aside. The aim of this paper is to present a new and more robust version of the conceivability argument for dualism that appeals to the subjective character of experience. Drawing on insights by philosophers in the phenomenological tradition, I conceptualise the first-person subjective character of experience as a transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenality that cannot be reduced to third-person facts about the physical world. Given this, the mind-body problem as it pertains to consciousness does not merely concern the inability of the set of physical facts about a brain state to capture the qualitative character of experience, but concerns the existential issue of why this brain state is accompanied by first-person subjectivity at all. This allows us to reconceive the conceivability argument in a way that presents a stronger case for dualism than the traditional version of the argument.

Keywords

consciousness, philosophical phenomenology, subjectivity, experiential dimension, dualism, conceivability argument

Introduction

Much of the literature on the mind-body problem in analytic philosophy over the past century has been centred on the ontological status of consciousness. Physicalism, or materialism, claims either that there are no mental properties at all, or that mental properties are reducible to or metaphysically supervene on physical properties. Historically, this has taken a variety of forms. The behaviourism of Gilbert Ryle (1949) suggests that mental states are translatable to dispositions to act. This inspired the type identity theory of U. T. Place (1956) and J. J. C. Smart (1959), who claim that kinds of mental state are identical with respective kinds of brain state. By contrast, functionalism suggests that mental states are identified by their respective causal roles (Lewis 1966; Armstrong 1968), while eliminative materialism claims that our ordinary notions of mental states will be eliminated by future findings in neuroscience (Churchland 1981).

Physicalism has been challenged by several philosophers who argue that it fails to account for consciousness. Influential arguments against physicalism over the past four decades include Saul Kripke's modal argument (1980), Frank Jackson's knowledge argument (1982), Joseph Levine's explanatory gap argument (1983), and David Chalmers' conceivability argument (1996).

These arguments appeal to the phenomenality of consciousness. When one thinks, perceives, or acts, there occurs a whirl of causal activity in one's brain. However, this causal activity does not go on "in the dark" (Chalmers 1996: 4). Rather, to borrow an expression from Thomas Nagel (1974), it is accompanied by a phenomenal "something it is like". This phenomenal "something it is like" is not entailed by the physical facts about the structure and dynamics of the brain, but remains a further fact beyond these physical facts. Given that the physical facts do not exhaust all the facts about the world, it is concluded that physicalism is false.

Among the most influential arguments against physicalism in contemporary philosophy of mind is Chalmers' conceivability argument. He formulates the argument as follows, where P is the totality of physical facts about the world and Q is any given phenomenal fact about consciousness:

- “1. $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable.
 2. If $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible.
 3. If $P \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false.
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4. Materialism is false.” (Chalmers 2010: 142)

Chalmers appeals to the logical coherence of a world that is indistinguishable from our world with respect to the complete physical facts but which differs from our world with respect to some phenomenal fact about consciousness. It follows that this phenomenal fact about consciousness is an extra fact that is not captured by the complete physical facts, which entails the falsity of physicalism.

Given the failure of physicalism to account for consciousness, many philosophers have proposed that dualism is true (BonJour 2013; Chalmers 1996; Fürst 2011; Gertler 2008; Nida-Rümelin 2016). Broadly speaking, dualism takes it as a fact that consciousness exists as a fundamental ingredient which is ontologically distinct from the physical features of the world. That is to say, phenomenality does not metaphysically supervene on physicality. Rather, certain phenomenal properties are suggested to be nomologically correlated with certain physical properties in virtue of contingent psychophysical laws (Chalmers 1996: 87).

The literature on the conceivability argument for dualism in contemporary analytic philosophy of mind usually emphasises the qualitative character of experience. By this, I mean the phenomenal feel of a given experiential quality, such as the painfulness of pain or the redness of red (Chalmers 1996; Jackson 1982; Kripke 1980). Accordingly, the form of dualism that tends to be endorsed by proponents of the conceivability argument is property dualism, which takes qualitative character and physical structure to be mutually irreducible properties (Chalmers 1996; Fürst 2011).

In turn, physicalists have pushed back against the conceivability argument. Their counterarguments have also tended to focus on the qualitative character of experience. For example, proponents of the phenomenal concept strategy concede that there is an epistemic gap between the qualitative character of experience and the physical description of a property, but suggest that these are just the same property known under different modes of presentation (Loar 1990; Papineau 2007). More controversially, proponents of the illusionist strategy suggest that the qualitative character of experience is just illusory (Dennett 1991; Frankish 2016; Kammerer 2021).

While the qualitative character of experience is emphasised in the debate about the mind-body problem, another essential aspect of consciousness is often set aside in the discussion, namely the subjective character of experience. By this, I mean the experience's being for a first-person experiential subject. A phenomenal experience is not an impersonal event that occurs *simpliciter* in a neutral third-person space, but is characterised by its first-person givenness, or what has been termed a “for-me-ness” (Kriegel 2009: 362). Indeed, some philosophers contend that this subjective character of experience is what makes the experience an experience at all (Blamauer 2013; Kriegel 2009; Zahavi 2005).

Given that first-person subjectivity is an essential feature of consciousness, its relative neglect in discussions about the mind-body problem is potentially significant. Thus, the aim of the present paper is to provide a new and more robust version of the conceivability argument for dualism that appeals to the subjective character of experience. In order to do this, a fuller account of subjective character is needed. In what is to follow, I elaborate further on the conceptual distinction between the qualitative character and the subjective character of experience, as well as reflect on the latter's relative neglect in the recent discussion of the mind-body problem. Drawing on some insights from philosophers in the phenomenological tradition, I then put forward a conceptualisation of the first-person subject as an experiential dimension that is transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenality. This, I argue, opens up a reconceptualisation of the conceivability argument for dualism which overcomes some of the common physicalist objections to the traditional version of the conceivability argument.

Qualitative Character and Subjective Character

Uriah Kriegel provides a lucid characterisation of the conceptual distinction between the qualitative character and the subjective character of experience:

“When I look at the white wall to my right, I have a conscious experience of the wall, and there is a whitish way it is like for me to have that experience. This ‘whitish way it is like for me’ constitutes the experience's phenomenal character. Plausibly, there are two discernible components to this phenomenal character, this ‘whitish way it is like for me.’ One is the ‘whitish’ component, the other is the ‘for me’ component. We may call the former *qualitative character* and the latter *subjective character*.” (Kriegel 2009: 361)

The qualitative character of experience, then, pertains to the particular feel or flavour of a given experiential quality. It might capture, for example, whether a given experiential state is red, or painful, or bitter, or loud, *et cetera*. The subjective character of experience pertains to the experience's being for a first-person subject of experience. As David Rosenthal notes,

“We each experience our sensory states in a way nobody else does, and from a point of view nobody else shares.” (Rosenthal 1986: 351)

Hence, unlike physical events which are paradigmatically impersonal and occur in third-person objective space, a phenomenal event is experienced from a given first-person point of view. Kriegel also refers to this first-person subjective character as the “for-me-ness” of experience (Kriegel 2009: 362).

Some philosophers propose that this first-person subjectivity is essential to consciousness. That is to say, the subjective character of experience is what makes the experience an experience at all. Michael Blamauer writes:

“I think I am not alone by holding to the claim that consciousness (or experience in the way we are acquainted with in everyday life) necessarily entails a subject of experience for whom it is somehow or other like to have this experience: If there is something it is like to be in a state of pain, then, necessarily, there is something it is like *for* someone or something to be so [...] whereas the phenomenal quality of an experience characterizes it just as the experience it actually is (in contrast to qualitatively different experiences), its subjective character (or the being-for-a-subject-of-experience of these qualities) is what makes the experience an experience at all: [...]” (Blamauer 2013: 304)

A similar point is made by Dan Zahavi:

“This first-personal givenness of experiential phenomena is not something incidental to their being, a mere varnish that the experiences could lack without ceasing to be experiences. On the contrary, this first-personal givenness makes the experiences *subjective*.” (Zahavi 2005: 122)

The suggestion is that an experience is necessarily experienced by an experiencer. This is not merely supposed to be a logical truth that follows from the form of the cognate accusative, but is an ontological truth that corresponds to a fact about the nature of conscious experience, namely the fact that conscious experience is always individuated to a given first-person point of view and does not occur in a third-person neutral space. It is somewhat akin to the statements that it is necessarily true that existence exists and that it is necessarily true that nonexistence does not exist, which obtain in virtue of their logical forms and also express substantive facts about the ontology of existence.

The subjective character of experience can be illustrated with the examples of experiential individuation and diachronic unity. Experiential individuation concerns what distinguishes the experiences of different individuals. It pertains to the discrete first-person ipseity, or minimal selfhood, that essentially distinguishes a given experiential subject from the countless plurality of other experiential subjects that exist. Zahavi (2014) illustrates this with the following thought experiment. Consider two twins, Mick and Mack, who are indistinguishable with respect to their physiological and psychological properties. Mick and Mack are both gazing at a white wall and are having white experiences which are qualitatively indistinguishable. That is to say, their experiences have the same qualitative character. Nonetheless, despite their having the same qualitative character, the two experiences differ from each other in a nontrivial way. Specifically, they are individuated from each other in virtue of their having different first-person experiencers. While one experience has a first-person givenness particular to Mick, the other experience has a first-person givenness particular to Mack. The experiences are individuated from each other with respect to their subjective characters.

Diachronic unity concerns the way in which phenomenal qualities that occur at different points in time can still be united experientially despite being temporally discontinuous. For example, consider that I experience moonlight shining through my window followed by a period of dreamless sleep and then upon waking I experience sunlight shining through my window. Despite the phenomenal quality of moonlight and the phenomenal quality of sunlight being temporally discontinuous, they are experientially united by both being events in my first-person experience. William James characterises this diachronic unity as follows:

“... whatever past feelings appear with those qualities must be admitted to receive the greeting of the present mental state, to be owned by it, and accepted as belonging together with it in a common self. This community of self is what the time-gap cannot break in twain, and is why a

present thought, although not ignorant of the time-gap, can still regard itself as continuous with certain portions of the past.” (James 1890/1952: 155)

Some scholars, such as Galen Strawson (1997) and Georges Dreyfus (2011), have denied that there is any such substantial diachronic unity on the grounds that thought often exhibits discontinuities, interruptions, and digressions. However, other philosophers note that such denial of diachronic unity is mistaken, as these discontinuities, interruptions, and digressions of thought take place over a stable background of consciousness. For example, Barry Dainton argues that a succession of isolated points of awareness does not account for the experience of temporal duration. He notes that:

“If you had an experience with content *do-re* and I had an experience with content *re-mi*, the result would obviously not be an experience of *do-re-mi*.” (Dainton 2008: 61)

Rather, the experience of *do-re-mi* requires the qualities of *do*, *re*, and *mi* to be experientially united through their having the same first-person givenness. Zahavi also observes that temporally discontinuous phenomenal qualities can be diachronically unified in virtue of their having the same “for-me-ness”, noting that “my present act of remembering and the past act that is being remembered both share similar first-personal self-givenness” (Zahavi 2011: 73). This first-person subjective character, he argues, distinguishes these phenomenal qualities experienced by him from phenomenal qualities experienced by others.

The subjective character of experience has received substantial amount of attention from philosophers in the continental phenomenological tradition (Henry 1965/1975; Husserl 1921–1928/1973; Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962; Sartre 1943/1956). As noted above, it has also inspired much discussion in analytic philosophy (Kriegel 2009; Nagel 1986; Rosenthal 1986). This is exemplified by Nagel’s question, “how can it be the case that one of the people in the world is *me*?” (Nagel 1986: 13). Nonetheless, in the specific debate regarding the mind-body problem, the subjective character of experience is often set aside. As noted earlier, many arguments against physicalism focus on the qualitative character of experience. For example, Nagel (1974) appeals to the quality of the experience of a conscious creature physiologically different from humans, while Kripke’s (1980) modal argument for dualism appeals to the qualitative character of pain and demonstrates its nonidentity with the firing of C-fibres. Jackson’s (1982) knowledge argument for dualism appeals to the qualitative character of redness and shows that knowledge of this phenomenal character is not entailed by physical knowledge. Chalmers’ (1996) conceivability argument for dualism appeals to possible worlds where the physical facts are constant but where qualitative characters are inverted or lacking. In her discussion of phenomenal concepts, Martina Fürst lists various qualitative characters as examples of phenomenal states, including “sensations like pains or itches, emotions like anxiety or joy, and perceptions like seeing the blue sky, smelling a rose or hearing a bell ringing” (Fürst 2011: 64).

Accordingly, contemporary opponents of physicalism often consider the force of the argument for dualism to rest on the qualitative character of experience. They argue that physicalism is false, because physical facts about structure and dynamics fail to capture the qualitative character of an experience, such as its painfulness, its redness, or its bitterness, *et cetera*. With this in mind, the conceivability argument for dualism as it has traditionally been presented can be more precisely formulated as follows, where *P* is the totality of

physical facts about the world and Q_o is a fact about the qualitative character of experience:

1. $P \& \sim Q_o$ is conceivable.
2. If $P \& \sim Q_o$ is conceivable, $P \& \sim Q_o$ is metaphysically possible.
3. If $P \& \sim Q_o$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false.
4. Materialism is false.

This more precise formulation highlights that the qualitative character is commonly taken to be the aspect of phenomenality that is irreducible to the physical facts about the world.

The resulting metaphysical picture is a form of property dualism, whereby there are two kinds of fundamental property in the world, namely phenomenal properties, which are characterised by their qualitative characters, and physical properties, which are characterised by their structural and dynamical dispositions. According to this picture, phenomenal qualities and physical properties are ontologically distinct and mutually irreducible, but are nomologically correlated via psychophysical laws. Chalmers states:

“... conscious experience involves properties of an individual that are not entailed by the physical properties of that individual, although they may depend lawfully on those properties. [...] there are properties of individuals in this world – the phenomenal properties – that are ontologically independent of physical properties.” (Chalmers 1996: 125)

Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail later, common physicalist objections to the conceivability argument tend to proceed by denying the ontological gap between the qualitative character of experience and the corresponding physical property. For example, proponents of the phenomenal concept strategy suggest that the qualitative character and the physical description are the same property known under different modes of presentation (Loar 1990; Papineau 2007), while proponents of the illusionist strategy deny that experience has a qualitative character (Dennett 1991; Frankish 2016; Kammerer 2021).

While the above property dualist picture offers an account of how the qualitative characters of experiences are correlated with physical events, it is left unclear how these experiences are individuated to first-person subjects. This may partly reflect the influence of David Hume, who famously claimed that he could perceive various perceptions but could not perceive a subject perceiving these perceptions. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, he writes:

“For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.” (Hume 1740/1978: 1.4.6.3)

This led Hume to assume the sceptical view of mentality as comprising a bundle of perceptions without any distinct perceiver of these perceptions. Some scholars in recent years, perhaps influenced by Hume’s scepticism, have also suggested that there are phenomenal qualities without an owner of such qualities (Krueger 2011; Metzinger 2003).

The problem with the aforementioned picture is that it seems to depict phenomenal qualities as free-floating events in an impersonal space. This fails to account for experiential individuation, that is, why one cluster of phenomenal qualities is given to one first-person perspective while another cluster of phenomenal qualities is given to another first-person perspective. Let us

reconsider Zahavi's (2014) thought experiment involving Mick and Mack, who are both gazing at a white wall. Despite the experiences having the same qualitative character, they differ from each other with respect to their being given to different first-person perspectives. If Mick turns away from the white wall and looks at a red door, there would then be two experiences with different qualitative characters, namely a red experience and a white experience. However, the red experience and white experience are not impersonal events that occur in some neutral space. Rather, the red experience is given to the first-person perspective particular to Mick, while the white experience is given to the first-person perspective particular to Mack.

The challenge for the bundle theorist is to account for this first-person experiential individuation without begging the question, that is, without invoking some kind of binding principle which presupposes a correlation between first-person individuation and the purported binding principle. For example, one might suggest that one bundle of perceptions is distinguished from another bundle of perceptions with respect to their comprising different causal series. However, their comprising different causal series does not account for why they present to different first-person experiencers, unless it is presupposed that there is a correlation between first-person individuation and causal contiguity. This problem is noted by Kripke:

“As is well known, Hume regarded the self as a notion constructed by relating various impressions through resemblance, contiguity, or causation. All we really have is a bundle of perceptions, unified by these relations. Many problems beset this idea. Why should my own impression not equally resemble that of someone else, or be equally contiguous with that of someone else? And similarly, couldn't an impression of mine have a causal relation to that of someone else? In fact, all these things do happen. It is not fair to say that only the impressions that *I* am aware of count.” (Kripke 2011: 306–307)

Similarly, Evan Thompson writes:

“When I say ‘Hello’, I not only cause you to hear my words, I also cause myself to hear them. One cause has two effects. One effect belongs to the causal series we call ‘me’, and the other belongs to the causal series we call ‘you’ [...] there's no way to ground this distinction between ‘me’ and ‘you’, even as just a way of talking, on causal relations alone. They charge that there's no way to pick out which series of events makes up one person versus another, when all we have to work with are discrete, impersonal events, related as cause and effect.” (Thompson 2020: 100–101)

Third-person facts about causal relations between events do not account for why one set of causally related events is specifically associated with one first-person subject and why another set of causally related events is specifically associated with another first-person subject. In other words, they cannot explain why there actually exist a countless plurality of individuated first-person experiencers and not just a single impersonal “view from nowhere” (Nagel 1986).

It is also insufficient to claim that the bundles are individuated in virtue of their being numerically distinct, as Derek Parfit does when he suggests that “one of these experiences is *this* experience, occurring in *this* particular mental life, and the other is *that* experience, occurring in *that* other particular mental life” (Parfit 1987: 517). This is because, as argued by Erich Klawonn (1991) and also by Zahavi (2005), the distinction between *this* mental life and *that* mental life is derived from the fact that these mental lives are individuated to different first-person subjective experiencers. In other words, the former mental life is characterised as *this* mental life precisely because

its first-person givenness is particular to me, whereas the latter mental life is characterised as *that* mental life because its first-person givenness is particular not to me, but to someone else. The different subjective characters are what make the mental lives numerically distinct.

A similar problem faces the bundle theorist with respect to diachronic unity. As before, one might suggest that perceptions in the past and perceptions in the present are united in virtue of their being causally related, which would account for psychological continuity across time. Again, however, the past perceptions and present perceptions being causally related does not account for why they must have the same first-person individuation, unless it is already presupposed that there is some sort of nomological relation between first-person individuation and causal relatedness. Therefore, notwithstanding Hume's observation, the subjective character of experience remains a *sine qua non* of phenomenality.

It could be contended that the scepticism associated with Hume does not amount to a scepticism about subjectivity *per se*, but rather amounts to a scepticism about a certain conceptualisation of subjectivity, namely the ego associated with René Descartes. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641/1993), Descartes conceptualises the ego as a mental substance that is separate from physical matter. Hume, on turning his attention inward, was unable to perceive such a mental substance, and so suggested a picture involving a bundle of perceptions without any distinct mental substance. However, I argue that Hume's sceptical bundle theory is false, because it looks for the subject in the wrong place. In what is to follow, I show that a substantive account of the subjective character of experience can be achieved without positing that a mental substance must be perceivable. Instead of seeking for it as an object of experience, I propose that the subject must be conceptualised as the first-person existence that is the transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenality. As will become clear, this conceptualisation of subjectivity will allow us to reconceive the conceivability argument for dualism.

The Subject as a Transcendental Condition of Possibility

The above considerations suggest that a satisfactory conceptualisation of the subjective character of experience must account for (i) first-person experiential individuation, (ii) first-person diachronic unity, and (iii) the absence of an impression corresponding to a subject. Hume's bundle theory and Chalmers' property dualism satisfy (iii) but struggle with (i) and (ii), whereas Descartes' substance dualism satisfies (i) and (ii) but struggles with (iii). I argue that conceptualising the subject as a first-person experiential dimension that is a transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenal experience can satisfy (i), (ii), and (iii).

A transcendental condition of possibility is a philosophical concept put forward by Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1993). Broadly speaking, it refers to a feature whose presence is necessary for the manifestation of a given set of phenomena to be possible. For example, a globe is an extended object and space is necessary for extension to be possible, and so space is a transcendental condition of possibility for the globe to manifest. Similarly, a collision is a causal process and time is necessary for causation to be possible, and so time is a transcendental condition of possibility for the collision to manifest.

The precise nature of the transcendental condition of possibility is somewhat elusive. It does not appear to be a straightforward analytic condition in the way that, for example, being unmarried is an analytic condition for being a bachelor. While, being a bachelor logically entails being unmarried, the relation between the *a priori* intuition of space and the intuition of a globe is not one of logical entailment (Burnham, Young 2007). However, it also does not appear to be a straightforward case of the synthetic *a posteriori*. For example, it is not a causal condition in the way that fuel is a causal condition for combustion. While fuel causally contributes to combustion, space does not cause the globe and time does not cause the collision. Rather, the transcendental condition of possibility centres on a claim to synthetic *a priori* knowledge. Consider the example of space as a transcendental condition of possibility for a globe. This is synthetic insofar as it does not follow from the meanings of the terms involved, but is a substantive fact about the world. It is *a priori* insofar as it is not discovered empirically, but is established through metaphysical reasoning.

As noted by Quassim Cassam (2007), the transcendental condition of possibility does not necessarily explain *how* one acquires the intuition of a globe, but it does show *that* a certain feature must be present in order for one to acquire the intuition of the globe. If one has the intuition of a globe and knowledge of space is necessary for one's intuition of the globe, then it follows that one has knowledge of space. Likewise, if there is experience and first-person subjectivity is necessary for experience, then it follows that there is first-person subjectivity.

Kant himself explores the idea of the subject being a transcendental condition of possibility for experience. He uses the expression “transcendental apperception” to refer to the condition that makes experience possible, noting that Hume's bundle of perceptions cannot possibly manifest unless there is already a consciousness to which that bundle of perceptions is individuated:

“There cannot be any knowledge within us nor can knowledge be connected and unified within itself without unity of consciousness preceding all empirical data and serving to make possible all representation of objects. This pure, original, and unchangeable consciousness I call ‘transcendental apperception’. It is clear that it deserves the name since even the most pure and objective unity, the unity of *a priori* concepts (space and time), is possible only by virtue of intuitions being related to transcendental apperception.” (Kant 1781/1993: A107)

Again, this notion of first-person subjectivity as a transcendental condition of possibility for experience centres on a claim to synthetic *a priori* knowledge, insofar as it is a substantive fact about the ontology of conscious experience that is proved through metaphysical reasoning rather than through empirical observation. It is a substantive philosophical truth that the existence of consciousness is necessary for there to be any experience at all.

This is clearly reminiscent of Descartes' (1641/1993) argument that one cannot doubt the existence of one's mind, because the very act of doubting necessitates the existence of one's mind. However, the characterisation of the subject as a transcendental condition of possibility for experience is significant, because it accounts for why Hume could perceive various perceptions but could not perceive a subject perceiving these perceptions. The subject is not something that can be perceived as an object of experience, but is the necessary condition for the very possibility of experience. As Kant notes, “it is manifest that I cannot know something as an object if I have to presuppose that thing in order to know any object in the first place” (Kant 1781/1993:

A402). Therefore, with regard to the self *qua* first-person conscious subject, eliminativism is false. The very fact that there is experience necessitates that the self exists, even though it does not present as an object of experience.

It must be conceded that it is unusual to defend dualism by appealing to Kant, given that Kant was a transcendental idealist. Nonetheless, I suggest that Kant's account of the subject as a transcendental condition of possibility for experience is an important insight that could be used to support a dualist ontology. For example, Zahavi describes Kant's transcendental subject as a "pure identity-pole", which refers to the way in which the first-person identity of a subject remains constant amidst the myriad of changing qualities that are experienced (Zahavi 2005: 104). Indeed, Kant himself distinguishes the phenomenal subjective sphere of consciousness from a noumenal realm of "things-in-themselves". Although he suggests that the nature of the noumenal realm cannot be discerned, such a picture is arguably compatible with a dualism between the individuated first-person subjective character of experience and a nonexperiential third-person world that supplies the first-person sphere with experiential content.

Building on Kant's insight, Zahavi (2005) describes the subjective character of experience as an experiential dimension that is characterised by its first-person ontology. This conceptualisation is also influenced by the insights of philosophers in the continental phenomenological tradition, notably Edmund Husserl (1921–1928/1973), Jean-Paul Sartre (1943/1956), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), and Michel Henry (1965/1975), who insist on first-person givenness or "for-me-ness" as being a dimension that is essential to experience. For example, Husserl notes that "the consciousness in which I am conscious of myself is my consciousness, and my consciousness of myself and I myself are concretely considered identical" (Husserl 1921–1928/1973: 151). Moreover, he notes that intersubjectivity is a necessary condition for experience, because an integral feature of one's experience is that the world is also experiential by others, which proves that solipsism is false. Sartre also proposes that "it is consciousness in its fundamental [*ipseity*] which, under certain conditions, allows the appearance of the ego as the transcendent phenomenon of that [*ipseity*]" (Sartre 1943/1956: 103). Similarly, Zahavi takes first-person subjectivity to be a fundamental feature that is essential to conscious experience. He states that "we can distinguish a multitude of changing experiences from a ubiquitous dimension of first-personal givenness, and the proposal is that we identify the latter with the experiential core self" (Zahavi 2011: 59–60).

Zahavi's account shares important features with Kant's account. First, like Kant's transcendental subject, Zahavi's experiential dimension is a fundamental feature whose existence is necessary for phenomenal experience to be possible at all. That is to say, the experiential dimension is a transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenal experience. Second, like Kant's transcendental subject, Zahavi's experiential dimension is not perceivable as an object of experience, but instead is the necessary precondition for experience. Hence, it too accounts for why Hume could perceive various perceptions but could not perceive a subject perceiving these perceptions. Third, like Kant's transcendental subject, Zahavi's experiential dimension is a minimalist notion of subjectivity. As Zahavi notes, "we are dealing with a kind of pure, formal, and empty individuality" (Zahavi 1999: 165). This individuality is a basic

existence that cannot be reduced to or derived from other sorts of property or relation.

More needs to be said about the choice of the expression “experiential dimension”. Zahavi does not explicitly define what he means by a dimension, but it seems to broadly indicate a formal feature of being, which in this case is the formal feature of being that is essential to phenomenality. To some extent, it could be compared to the dimensions of space and time. Just as space and time are formal features of the world that are transcendental conditions of possibility respectively for extension and causation, the experiential dimension of first-person subjectivity is a formal feature of being that is the transcendental condition of possibility for phenomenal experience. An extended object necessitates a spatial dimension, a causal process necessitates a temporal dimension, and a phenomenal experience necessitates an experiential dimension of first-person subjectivity. However, this experiential dimension is a fundamentally different kind of dimension from space and time, insofar as space and time pertain to third-person structures and dynamics while the experiential dimension pertains to first-person subjectivity. In a sense, then, consciousness is eternal or timeless, because temporality is a feature of the third-person physical world from which first-person subjectivity is distinct, although the temporality of the physical world may certainly be experienced within the first-person existence of consciousness. This recalls Husserl’s (1893–1917/1966) notion of an absolute consciousness, which itself is atemporal but forms the condition for the experience of temporal change. Along a similar line to the characterisation of subjectivity as an experiential dimension, Christian List (2022) has characterised conscious subjects as first-person worlds, which are distinct realisers of a shared third-person world. That is to say, conscious subjects are distinct first-person existences, while phenomenal qualities are akin to events that occur within these first-person existences.

The aforementioned conceptualisation of consciousness as first-person existence has significant merits. First, it accounts for first-person experiential individuation. Let us revisit Mick and Mack, who are both gazing at a white wall and enjoying white experiences. Although these experiences have the same qualitative character, they differ with respect to their subjective characters, with one experience having a first-person givenness exclusive to Mick and the other experience having a first-person givenness exclusive to Mack. According to the account being proposed, this individuation can be attributed to the experiences being particular to different experiential dimensions or first-person existences. While one white experience occurs within the first-person existence that is associated with Mick, the other white experience occurs within the first-person existence that is associated with Mack. Crucially, the distinction between the two experiential dimensions is not derived from a difference in some other property, such as qualitative character, spatial location, or causal cohesion, but is a basic difference in the essential identities of the first-person subjects. Indeed, given that we can conceive of countless different points of view from which the world can be experienced, we could even acknowledge that there exist an infinite plurality of consciousnesses and still acknowledge that each consciousness exists as a distinct being in virtue of its unique first-person subjective character.

Second, the characterisation of subjectivity as an experiential dimension or first-person existence accounts for first-person diachronic unity. In my example of dreamless sleep preceded by the phenomenal quality of moonlight and

followed by the phenomenal quality of sunlight, the temporally discontinuous qualities are experientially unified by their occurring in the same first-person experiential dimension. This first-person experiential dimension maintains its identity amidst the temporally discontinuous phenomenal qualities. Zahavi writes:

“... the act-transcendent identity of the self [...] is grounded in the pervasive dimension of first-personal experiencing. Whereas we live through a number of different experiences, the dimension of first-personal experiencing remains the same. In short [...] it may still be described as the *invariant* dimension of first-personal givenness throughout the multitude of changing experiences. [...] To question the unity of mind by pointing to alleged interruptions in the stream of consciousness (dreamless sleep, coma, etc.) is consequently pointless, since one thereby makes the erroneous assumption that it is the *continuity* and *contiguity* between two experiences that makes them belong to the same self, rather than their shared mineness, or their shared manner of givenness.” (Zahavi 2005: 132)

While there may be no qualities being experienced during an episode of dreamless sleep or coma, there remains, in virtue of this invariant dimension of first-person “for-me-ness”, the subject’s potential for experience. Dainton endorses such a view, noting that “a subject persists during a lapse of consciousness so long as it remains *capable* of having experience” (Dainton 2008: 79). Diachronic unity is thus maintained by the constancy of the identity of a first-person existence.

Third, as noted above, the characterisation of subjectivity as an experiential dimension or first-person existence accounts for why Hume, on turning his attention inward, was able to perceive various perceptions but not a subject perceiving these perceptions. According to the view being proposed, the subject does not present as an object of experience, but is the first-person existence that is necessary for the very possibility for experience. Hence, it provides a substantive account of subjectivity without requiring subject itself to be perceivable. The conscious subject exists as a real entity, insofar as it is a fundamental and invariant first-person being that is not derived from other sorts of property or relation, but there is no need to attribute to it properties of an object of experience. As Cedric Evans notes, “from the fact that the self is not an object of experience it does not follow that it is non-experiential” (Evans 1970: 145).

The discussion so far has offered a largely phenomenological account of first-person subjectivity. That is to say, it has sought to establish the character that consciousness must have in order for it to accommodate the possibility of experience. However, I argue that the account of subjectivity presented here is also metaphysically significant. In the following section, I show how this account allows us to reconceive the conceivability argument to present a stronger case for dualism than the traditional version of the conceivability argument.

Reconceiving the Conceivability Argument

Recall that the general strategy of the conceivability argument, as it is traditional presented, is to demonstrate a modal gap between the totality of physical facts about the world and any phenomenal fact about the qualitative character of experience. This occurs because physical information is ultimately information about structure and dynamics, which fails to entail the phenomenal feel of an experiential quality. By the same token, I argue that

such a modal gap also occurs between the totality of physical facts and the subjective character of experience. Physical information, *qua* third-person information about structure and dynamics, yields only further third-person information about structure and dynamics. However, nothing in this third-person information about structure and dynamics entails the presence of a first-person experiential dimension. Hence, given all the third-person facts about the structure and dynamics of a physical process, whether there is also a first-person experiential dimension associated with this process remains a further fact to be considered.

We have already encountered the irreducibility of the first-person experiential dimension in the aforementioned challenge of accounting for first-person experiential individuation without begging the question. Appealing to a structural or dynamical difference between some two perceptions, such as spatiotemporal location, may capture why the perceptions lack contiguity and continuity in space and time respectively, but this does not account for why the perceptions present to different first-person experiencers, unless it is already presupposed that spatiotemporal location is nomologically related to first-person givenness. Likewise, the fact that a given bundle of perceptions is contiguous and continuous in space and time does not account for why this bundle of perceptions present to the same first-person experiencer rather than different perceptions to different first-person experiencers, unless it is already presupposed that spatiotemporal location is nomologically related to first-person givenness. Accordingly, Zahavi states that “the first-personal givenness of experience should not be taken as the result of a higher-order representation, reflection, internal monitoring, or introspection, but rather should be treated as an *intrinsic* feature of experience” (Zahavi 2005: 61). Likewise, appealing to the physical facts about a system such as the brain may capture the third-person features of the brain’s structure and dynamics, but it does not account for why there a first-person experiential dimension associated with this brain. When the mind-body problem is reframed around the subjective quality of experience, the modal gap between physicality and phenomenality is not merely a gap between physical structure and the phenomenal feel of experience, but is also a gap between the third-person structure of the world and the existence of the first-person dimension of subjective experience. As Zahavi suggests, “the experiential dimension does not have to do with the existence of ineffable qualia; it has to do with the dimension of first-personal experiencing” (Zahavi 2005: 122–123). This aspect of the mind-body problem, then, can be couched as follows. We know that the subjective character of experience is necessarily individuated to a given first-person subject. However, nothing in the totality of third-person physical facts about the structure and dynamics of a system tells us why it should be accompanied by *this* first-person subject rather than *that* first-person subject, or even why it should be accompanied by a first-person experiential dimension at all. Insofar as they are impersonal, structural and dynamical facts yield only more structural and dynamical facts. The existence of first-person individuated experience remains a further fact to be considered.

And so, the mind-body problem as it pertains to consciousness does not merely concern the inability of the set of physical facts about a brain state to capture the qualitative character of experience, but concerns the existential issue of why this brain state is accompanied by first-person subjectivity at all. It is logically conceivable that the structure and dynamics of the brain state could

occur without its being accompanied by an experiential dimension. In light of this, the conceivability argument for dualism can be reconceived as follows, where P is the totality of third-person facts about the physical world and Q_s is a fact about the first-person subjective character of experience:

1. $P \& \sim Q_s$ is conceivable.
2. If $P \& \sim Q_s$ is conceivable, $P \& \sim Q_s$ is metaphysically possible.
3. If $P \& \sim Q_s$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false.
4. Materialism is false.

This reconceived conceivability argument appeals to the logical coherence of a world that is indistinguishable from our world with respect to the complete third-person physical facts but which differs from our world with respect to a fact about the first-person subjective character of experience. It follows that this fact about the subjective character of experience is an extra fact that is not captured by the complete physical facts, and so physicalism is false.

It is important to note that the above appeal to the subjective character of experience is not simply an appeal to essential indexicality. As John Perry (1979) and David Lewis (1979) show, there are certain beliefs, such as one's beliefs about where, when, and who one is, that cannot be expressed in language that does not contain indexicals. For example, on learning that his sack of sugar is torn, Perry expresses the belief "I am making a mess" (Perry 1979: 3). Here, the indexical "I" is essential. If it is replaced by a nonindexical term with the same referent, then the resulting sentence would not adequately capture Perry's belief. Chalmers (2010) recognises this peculiar feature of indexicality and provides a more sophisticated formulation of the conceivability argument that includes an essential indexical. Rather than merely stating that $P \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, he states that $PTI \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, where T is a totality operator to specify the totality of physical facts and I is an essentially indexical fact that is not entailed by PT (Chalmers 2010: 161). Accordingly, Chalmers' argument can be expressed as follows:

1. $PTI \& \sim Q$ is conceivable.
2. If $PTI \& \sim Q$ is conceivable, $PTI \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible.
3. If $PTI \& \sim Q$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false.
4. Materialism is false.

Interestingly, Nagel (1986) seems to suggest that the irreducibility of indexicality undermines physicalism. This would imply that dualism could be supported by the fact that the first-person indexical cannot be captured by a physical description. By contrast, Chalmers (2010) acknowledges that I cannot be entailed from PT , but he does not consider this on its own to be sufficient to undermine physicalism. This is because he considers indexicality merely to be a thin fact about the context and location wherein the agent is centred, which does not introduce anything ontologically novel.

However, subjectivity is a more substantial fact than indexicality. Whereas indexicality is a contextual fact about the centering of an agent, subjectivity is an ontological and a phenomenological fact about the existence and character of first-person conscious experience. To say that something has a subjective character is not merely to say that it is relative to a given centre, but it is to say that there exists a distinct first-person experiential dimension associated with that centre which makes individuated and unified experience possible at all. As the following considerations show, the existence of this first-personal experiential dimension is a further fact beyond the indexical and physical facts.

First, not all indexicals involve subjectivity. We could conceive of a nonconscious system that expresses an indexical proposition despite lacking subjective experience altogether. For example, consider that Perry's zombie twin, which is physically indistinguishable from Perry but is entirely nonconscious, responds to the torn sack of sugar with the proposition "I am making a mess". As noted by Chalmers (1996), such an utterance requires the system to be able to respond to its environment and distinguish itself from others, but there may be no first-person experiential dimension associated with this processing. Second, indexicality on its own is insufficient to account for experiential individuation, insofar as the specification of a given centre underdetermines how experiences at that centre present to specific first-person experiential dimensions. We might ordinarily assume that a single centre is associated with a single first-person experiencer, but this is not necessarily the case. For example, List suggests that "more than one distinct stream of conscious experience might be compatible with occupying the same centre in the world" (List 2022: 10). Therefore, there remains a gap between indexicality and subjectivity. Given the physical and indexical facts about a given centre, whether that centre is associated with a first-person subjective character remains a further fact to consider.

Of course, it may be true that any belief about the subjective character of experience is essentially indexical, given that subjective experience is necessarily individuated to a first-person experiencer (Zahavi 1999). Nonetheless, facts about indexicality do not exhaust the facts about subjectivity. The subjective character of experience introduces something ontologically novel in a way that mere indexicality does not.

The modal gap between the third-person structure of the world and the first-person subjective character of experience can be illustrated with some scenarios where the subjective characters associated with certain centres are changed. Consider that Mick is gazing at a red door and Mack is gazing at a white wall. Also consider that in our actual world w_1 , the first-person experiential dimension Q_{MICK} is associated with events in Mick's brain, while the first-person experiential dimension Q_{MACK} is associated with events in Mack's brain. Accordingly, in w_1 , the red experience has a first-person givenness particular to Q_{MICK} and the white experience has a first-person givenness particular to Q_{MACK} .

Now consider a counterfactual world w_2 , which is indistinguishable from w_1 with respect to its third-person physical structure. Nonetheless, w_2 differs from w_1 with respect to first-person experiential individuation. In w_2 , the experiential dimension Q_{MICK} is associated with events in Mack's brain, while the experiential dimension Q_{MACK} is associated with events in Mick's brain. Accordingly, in w_2 , the white experience has a first-person givenness particular to Q_{MICK} and the red experience has a first-person givenness particular to Q_{MACK} . While this scenario may seem fantastical, there is no logical contradiction in it. We can conceive of all physical facts about the third-person structure of the world holding without the same facts about first-person experiential individuation holding, so that *this* experiential dimension is instead associated with that body and *that* experiential dimension is instead associated with this body. It follows that the facts about first-person givenness do not metaphysically supervene on the totality of physical facts about the third-person structure of the world.

The above thought experiment is analogous to the scenarios in the philosophical literature where the haecceities of physically indistinguishable features are swapped (Adams 1979; Black 1952; Melia 2003). For example, Max Black (1952) considers a possible world that contains only two iron globes that are physically indiscernible. The truth of haecceitism follows from the fact that we can conceive of another possible world that is physically indistinguishable from original world, but nonetheless differs from it insofar as these two iron globes have swapped their spatial locations. Some scholars have objected to haecceitism by defending the principle of identity of indiscernibles, which claims that any objects that share all the same properties are identical (Hacking 1975; O’Leary-Hawthorne 1995). These objections have, in turn, been criticised in detail by Katherine Hawley (2009), who suggests that there is good reason to reject the principle of identity of indiscernibles. I also argue that an appeal to the principle of identity of indiscernibles fails to undermine the scenarios where the subjective characters associated with certain centres are changed. While w_1 and w_2 may be physically indiscernible with regards to their third-person properties, they are discernible from a first-person point of view. For instance, from the first-person experiential perspective of Q_{MICK} , w_1 is associated with red and w_2 is associated with white. Hence, the subjective character of experience could be considered a form of haecceity that is discernible from the first-person perspective.

For another logically conceivable scenario, consider a possible world w_3 , which is also indistinguishable from w_1 with respect to its third-person physical structure. However, in w_3 , neither Mick’s brain nor Mack’s brain is associated with either Q_{MICK} or Q_{MACK} . Instead, a different first-person experiential dimension $Q_{MICKMACK}$ is associated with both brains simultaneously. Accordingly, in w_3 , the red phenomenal quality and the white phenomenal quality are both present in the first-person experiential dimension of $Q_{MICKMACK}$. For example, the red and white may present to the subject as spatially discontinuous patches on different sides of the visual field, or they may blend into a pink phenomenal quality. Again, such a scenario seems fantastical and may not be naturally possible in our world, but there is no logical contradiction in it. Once all the physical facts about the third-person structure of the world are given, where the first-person dimension of “for-me-ness” features remains an open question.

The modal gap can also be illustrated with a more traditional kind of scenario used in the philosophy of mind literature, namely the logical conceivability of a zombie world (Chalmers, 1996). Consider a counterfactual world w_4 , which is indistinguishable from w_1 with respect to its third-person physical structure. However, in w_4 , there is no experiential dimension associated with the events in Mick’s brain or with the events in Mack’s brain. In other words, the same physical processes are going on in w_1 and w_4 , but in w_4 they are going on “in the dark” with no associated first-person experiencer. Again, while this scenario may be naturally impossible in our world, it is nonetheless logically conceivable.

Finally, consider a possible world w_5 , which is also indistinguishable from w_1 with respect to its third-person physical structure, but which is saturated with experiential subjects. Such a world recalls List’s (2022) aforementioned suggestion that there could be more than one distinct stream of conscious experience at the same centre. In w_5 , Mick’s brain is not associated with a single subject Q_{MICK} . Instead, events in Mick’s brain in w_5 are associated with

a plurality of subjects, $Q_1, Q_2 \dots Q_n$. Accordingly, when Mick's eyes turn to the red door, the same red phenomenal quality simultaneously presents to multiple first-person experiential realities. Again, this scenario is at least a logical possibility that is compatible with the third-person physical facts about the causal structure of the world, even though it may seem metaphysically extravagant.

The above scenarios indicate that the experiential dimension of first-person subjectivity is a further fact over and above the totality of physical facts about the third-person structure and dynamics of the world. The scenarios w_1, w_2, w_3, w_4 , and w_5 are physically indistinguishable with respect to their structural and dynamical properties. Nonetheless, in spite of their having the same structural and dynamical properties, it is logically conceivable that they could vary with respect to the psychophysical laws which describe the ways in which first-person experiential perspectives are correlated with these structural and dynamical properties. That is to say, the subjective character of experience does not supervene metaphysically on the impersonal structure of the world.

Given that the subjective character of experience is a further fact beyond the complete physical facts about the world, it follows that dualism is true. However, rather than merely being a dualism between physicality and the qualitative character of experience, it is a dualism between the third-person physical structure of the world and the first-person experiential dimension of consciousness. This is a genuine ontological dualism, insofar as its truth corresponds to a substantive fact about the nature of reality as it pertains to mind and matter. Specifically, it proposes that the first-person experiential dimension of consciousness exists as a fundamental entity that is ontologically separate from, though nomologically related to, the third-person physical structure of the world. In the following section, I consider some of the advantages that this reconceived conceivability argument has over the more traditional version of the conceivability argument.

Implications

The novel form of dualism presented here has advantages over the more traditional forms of substance dualism and property dualism, some of which we have already encountered. As noted earlier, it fares better than property dualism at accounting for experiential individuation and diachronic unity. By acknowledging that different experiences can be particular to different first-person experiential dimensions, it accommodates how the white experience of Mick and the white experience of Mack are not impersonal events in some neutral space but are individuated to different subjects. By acknowledging that temporally discontinuous phenomenal qualities can be particular to the same invariant dimension of first-person experience, it accommodates how the phenomenal quality of moonlight and the phenomenal quality of sunlight both exhibit the same "for-me-ness" despite their being interrupted by dreamless sleep. It fares better than traditional substance dualism, as its characterisation of the first-person subject as the transcendental condition of possibility for experience accounts for why it is not itself perceivable as an object of experience. Hence, it rebuts Hume's scepticism about the ego. Moreover, the dualism presented here is a naturalistic dualism, insofar as the fact of first-person subjectivity does not interfere with the third-person causal structure of the world. Hence, it allows us to accept that a scientific and nontheistic view

of the physical world is true, while also acknowledging that consciousness is ontologically fundamental.

The reconceived conceivability argument also overcomes some of the common physicalist objections to the traditional version of the conceivability argument, such as those which use the phenomenal concept strategy and the illusionist strategy. The phenomenal concept strategy, developed by Brian Loar (1990) and defended by David Papineau (2007), is based on the idea that a single referent can be known under different modes of presentation, thus yielding different concepts. For example, consider that I am perceiving a red object. The perceptual state can be known as a physical concept under a physical mode of presentation, which pertains to a description of what happens in my brain when I perceive red. It can also be known as a phenomenal concept under a phenomenal mode of presentation, which pertains to my subjective experience of the qualitative character of red. The physicalist claims that both the physical concept and the phenomenal concept have the same referent, which is the state of my brain when I perceive red. However, the physical concept and the phenomenal concept are conceptually isolated from each other, which is why they appear to be mutually irreducible to each other. This is supposed to account for the dualist intuition that there is a gap between a physical description and the qualitative character of experience.

The phenomenal concept strategy is considered to be a powerful counterargument to the traditional version of the conceivability argument, which focuses on the qualitative character of experience. It concedes that $P \& \sim Q_Q$ is conceivable in virtue of the fact that the physical description and the qualitative character are conceptually isolated from each other, but it denies that $P \& \sim Q_Q$ is metaphysically possible insofar as the physical character and the qualitative character are purported to have the same referent. However, it does not undermine the reconceived conceivability argument, which focuses on the subjective character of experience. This is because the phenomenal concept strategy still has to presuppose that there are two distinct modes of presentation, one which occasions the physical concept and another which occasions the phenomenal concept. Hence, even if it is conceded that the physical concept and the phenomenal concept are referring to the same property under two different modes of presentation, there remains a dualism with respect to the modes of presentation.

The metaphysical significance of this becomes clear when we consider what these modes of presentation comprise. As noted above, the physical mode of presentation comprises the third-person description of the structure and dynamics of the perceptual state. By contrast, Papineau characterises phenomenal concepts as “involving stored sensory templates”, which “will be set up on initial encounters with the relevant referents” (Papineau 2007: 114). This raises the question of what “involving” a sensory template means. Given that a phenomenal concept pertains to the qualitative character of experience and given that the qualitative character of experience necessarily presents to an individuated first-person point of view, “involving” a sensory template corresponds to my first-person acquaintance with the perceptual state. Accordingly, the phenomenal mode of presentation comprises the first-person experiential dimension wherein the subjective experience of the perceptual state manifests.

As noted earlier, the presence of this first-person experiential dimension is a further fact that is not captured by third-person structural and dynamical facts.

No amount of information about the structure and dynamics of a perceptual system can tell us why there is also a first-person experiential dimension associated with this system. And so, while the phenomenal concept strategy may be able to show how the physical description of a perceptual state and the qualitative character of experience may have the same referent, it does so by presupposing that there are separate third-person and first-person modes of presentation. Insofar as the first-person mode of presentation comprises a distinct experiential dimension that is irreducible to third-person facts, this amounts to an ontological dualism between the physical structure of the perceptual system and the subjective character of experience.

The illusionist strategy, associated with Daniel Dennett (1991), Keith Frankish (2016), and François Kammerer (2021), is a more radical physicalist strategy that claims that the qualitative character of experience is just an illusion. According to illusionists, experiences are erroneously judged to have qualitative characters, but they do not actually have them. These erroneous judgements, they claim, can be explained in third-person terms without invoking qualitative characters. For example, our cognitive systems may be structured in ways that result in certain perceptual contents appearing to be ineffable (Dennett 1991). Again, this is considered to challenge the traditional conceivability argument. Specifically, it denies the premise that if $P \& \sim Q_o$ is metaphysically possible, materialism is false, by denying that there is such a thing as Q_o .

Like the phenomenal concept strategy, the illusionist strategy focuses specifically on the qualitative character of experience. As noted above, it suggests that qualitative characters can be explained away as judgements that can be characterised exclusively in terms of third-person facts about the structures and dynamics of our cognitive systems. In response, it could be noted that the illusionist argument does not actually undermine the reality of the qualitative character of experience, but rather presents a challenge to the justification of a judgement about the qualitative character of experience. Even if we concede that our cognitive systems are structured in ways that produce judgements that experiences have qualitative characters, these judgements could still be true. That is to say, our experiences may have qualitative characters, but these qualitative characters may not have causal roles in how our judgements about these qualitative characters are formed. Moreover, it could be contended that illusionism is empirically false, because a third-person judgement fails to capture what is distinctive about a first-person experience. Conceivably, a judgement can occur without an accompanying qualitative character, but such a scenario is phenomenologically different from a scenario where the judgement occurs with an accompanying qualitative character. This is illustrated by Charles Siewert's (1998) example of the difference between blindsight vision and regular vision. Given that these involve the same sort of judgement, the illusionist strategy would have to claim that they are indistinguishable. However, they are not indistinguishable. There is a substantial difference between them, insofar as the former does not present like anything while the latter presents like something, but the illusionist strategy fails to account for this difference. And so, it must be acknowledged that there is a further ingredient over and above the judgement to account for why the latter but not the former is associated with an appearance.

Nonetheless, even if it is conceded that experiences do not instantiate qualitative characters, illusionism is undermined by the subjective character of

experience. The illusionist strategy suggests that judgements can be characterised in third-person terms. However, this fails to account for the fact that an experience does not occur in some neutral third-person space, but is individuated to a given first-person experiencer. There is a substantial phenomenological difference between my own first-person acquaintance with my subjective experience and a third-person characterisation of my judgement about that experience. The third-person approach suggested by illusionism is unable to explain this difference. While such a third-person approach may yield a structural and dynamical account of how a judgement about an experience is formed, it cannot account for the datum of the first-person subjectivity of that experience. Therefore, illusionism is false. The fact that there is such a first-person experiential perspective that differs from a third-person “view from nowhere” necessitates that it is true that consciousness exists. Accordingly, my knowledge of the existence of consciousness does not rely on some intuition or judgement about the qualitative character of experience, but is secured by the very fact that I experience the experience in a distinctively first-person manner.

Before I conclude, it is also worth mentioning that some physicalists have tried to deny that $P \& \sim Q_p$ is metaphysically possible by appealing to grounding (O’Conaill 2017; Schaffer 2017). Such a strategy suggests that there is a strong metaphysical necessity between physicality and phenomenality, rather than a contingent nomological relation. Of course, grounding is a contentious notion and philosophers have given reasons to suppose that grounding physicalism is false. For example, some have argued that problems arise when we ask what grounds the grounding facts (Dasgupta 2017; Sider 2011). Others have highlighted more general problems with the notion of strong metaphysical necessity (Chalmers 1996; Leuenberger 2014; Seager 2014). Such criticism of strong metaphysical necessity has also recently been used to argue that neutral monism is false (Maung 2019). A full discussion of these issues is not within the scope of this paper, but it is worth sketching briefly how the reconceived conceivability argument reinforces a specific argument against grounding physicalism, namely Zach Blaesí’s (2018) argument that grounding fails to close the explanatory gap.

Underpinning Blaesí’s argument is the proposal that the grounding relation is supposed to be intelligible. That is to say, for Q to be grounded in P , there must be something about the nature of Q that explains Q ’s grounding in P . However, Blaesí notes, for example, that there is nothing in the qualitative character of pain that explains why the firing of C-fibres is associated with that specific quality rather than with another. Hence, there is no reason to suppose that the qualitative character of experience is grounded in the structural and dynamical facts of a physical system. There remains an explanatory gap between the physical facts and the qualitative character of experience. An analogous argument could be made with the subjective character of experience, which further reinforces this problem. Given that first-person subjectivity and third-person objectivity are such different domains, there is nothing in the first-person subjective character of experience that explains why certain third-person facts about the structure and dynamics of a physical system are associated with such a first-person subjective character. For example, there is nothing in the subjectivity of my experience that explains why this body is specifically associated with *my* experience rather than with *your* experience or, indeed, with any experience at all. This suggests that the subjective

character of experience is not grounded in the physical facts, which indicates that grounding physicalism is false.

And so, by reintroducing the subjective character of experience to the discussion about the mind-body problem, the conceivability argument for dualism can be reconceived in a way that overcomes some common physicalist objections. The phenomenal concept strategy, the illusionist strategy, and the grounding strategy seek to challenge the traditional conceivability argument by scrutinising the qualitative character of experience. However, even if their criticisms of the qualitative character are conceded, they continue to presuppose a gap between the third-person structure of the world and the first-person subjective character of experience.

Conclusion

Conceptualising the subjective character of experience as a first-person experiential dimension enables us to reconceive the conceivability argument for dualism in the philosophy of mind. The mind-body problem as it pertains to consciousness is not just the problem of how the qualitative character of experience could possibly be entailed by the set of physical facts about a brain state, but is the problem of why this brain state is accompanied by first-person subjectivity at all. I have argued that this first-person subjective character of experience is a further fact beyond the complete third-person physical facts about the world. Therefore, dualism is true. According to this view, consciousness *qua* first-person subjective existence is a fundamental entity that is ontologically separate from the third-person physical features of the world. Such a view has notable advantages over some other forms of dualism, as it is able to account for experiential individuation, diachronic unity, and the apparent lack of an impression corresponding to a mental substance. It also overcomes some common physicalist objections to the traditional version of the conceivability argument, including the phenomenal concept strategy and the illusionist strategy, which scrutinise the qualitative character of experience but fail to undermine the subjective character of experience.

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Hane Htut Maung

Ponovno osmišljavanje argumenta pojmljivosti za dualizam u filozofiji uma

Sažetak

U filozofskoj literaturi o svijesti i problemu odnosa uma i tijela, argument pojmljivosti protiv fizikalizma obično se uzima kao podrška obliku dualizma između fizikalnosti i fenomenalnosti. Obično se rasprava usredotočuje na kvalitativni karakter iskustva, što je fenomenalni osjećaj određenog iskustva. Nasuprot tome, subjektivni karakter iskustva – tj. njegova individuacija danom subjektu u prvom licu – nastoji se ostaviti po strani. Cilj je ovog rada predstaviti novu i snažniju verziju argumenta pojmljivosti za dualizam koji se poziva na subjektivni karakter iskustva. Oslanjajući se na uvide filozofa u fenomenološkoj tradiciji, konceptualiziram subjektivni karakter iskustva u prvom licu kao transcendentalni uvjet mogućnosti fenomenalnosti koji se ne može svesti na činjenice trećeg lica o fizičkom svijetu. S obzirom na to, problem uma i tijela koji se odnosi na svijest ne tiče se samo nemogućnosti skupa fizičkih činjenica o stanju mozga da uhvati kvalitativni karakter iskustva nego i egzistencijalnog pitanja o tome zašto je to stanje mozga uopće popraćeno subjektivnošću prvog lica. To nam omogućuje da ponovno zamislimo argument pojmljivosti na način koji predstavlja jaču argumentaciju za dualizam od tradicionalne verzije argumenta.

Ključne riječi

svijest, filozofijska fenomenologija, subjektivnost, iskustvena dimenzija, dualizam, argument pojmljivosti

Hane Htut Maung

Das Neudenken des Arguments der Vorstellbarkeit für den Dualismus in der Philosophie des Geistes

Zusammenfassung

In der philosophischen Literatur zum Bewusstsein und dem Leib-Seele-Problem, wird das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit gegen den Physikalismus gewöhnlich als Unterstützung einer Form des Dualismus zwischen Physikalität und Phänomenalität genommen. Üblicherweise ist die Diskussion auf den qualitativen Charakter der Erfahrung fokussiert, welches das phänomenale Gefühl einer bestimmten Erfahrung ist. Im Gegensatz dazu, wird der subjektive Charakter der Erfahrung, beziehungsweise ihre Individualisierung dem gegebenen erste-Person-Subjekt, oft beiseite gelassen. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist eine neue und robustere Version des Arguments der Vorstellbarkeit für den Dualismus zu präsentieren, die an den subjektiven Charakter der Erfahrung appelliert. Aufgrund der Einsichten der Philosophen der phänomenologischen Tradition, konzipiere ich den subjektiven Charakter der Erfahrung in erster Person als eine transzendente Möglichkeitsbedingung für die Phänomenalität, die sich nicht auf Fakten einer dritten Person über die physische Welt reduzieren lässt. Angesichts dessen, betrifft das Leib-Seele-Problem, das sich auf das Bewusstsein bezieht, nicht nur die Unfähigkeit der Reihe physischer Fakten zum Gehirnzustand, den qualitativen Charakter der Erfahrung zu erfassen, sondern auch die existentielle Frage, warum überhaupt dieser Gehirnzustand von der Subjektivität der ersten Person begleitet wird. Dies ermöglicht uns, das Argument der Vorstellbarkeit neu zu denken, und zwar auf die Art, die eine stärkere Argumentation als die traditionelle Version des Arguments für den Dualismus präsentiert.

Schlüsselwörter

Bewusstsein, philosophische Phänomenologie, Subjektivität, Erfahrungsdimension, Dualismus, Argument der Vorstellbarkeit

Hane Htut Maung

Repenser l'argument de la concevabilité pour le dualisme dans la philosophie de l'esprit

Résumé

Dans la littérature philosophique sur la conscience et la relation corps-esprit, l'argument de la concevabilité contre le physicalisme est généralement utilisé pour soutenir une forme de dualisme entre la physicalité et la phénoménalité. Généralement, la discussion se concentre sur le caractère qualitatif de l'expérience, ce qui est le sentiment phénoménal d'une expérience donnée. En revanche, le caractère subjectif de l'expérience ou son individuation à un sujet donné à la première personne, tend à être mis de côté. L'objectif de ce travail est de présenter une nouvelle et rigoureuse version de l'argument de la concevabilité pour le dualisme qui fait appel au caractère subjectif de l'expérience. En m'inspirant de théories philosophiques issues de la tradition phénoménologique, je conceptualise le caractère subjectif de l'expérience à la première personne en tant que condition transcendante de la possibilité de phénoménalité qui ne peut être réduit aux faits relatifs au monde physique vécus à la troisième personne. Compte tenu de cela, le problème de l'esprit et du corps qui se rapporte à la conscience ne concerne pas seulement l'incapacité de l'ensemble des faits physique relatifs à l'état du cerveau capable de saisir le caractère qualitatif de l'expérience, mais touche au problème existentiel de savoir pourquoi cet état du cerveau est, par ailleurs, accompagné par la subjectivité de la première personne. Cela nous permet de repenser l'argument de la concevabilité d'une manière qui présente une argumentation plus solide pour le dualisme que les arguments mis en avant par la version traditionnelle.

Mots-clés

conscience, phénoménologie philosophique, subjectivité, dimension expérientielle, dualisme, argument de la concevabilité