članci
Articles

UDK 24–183.4
https://doi.org/10.31337/oz.77.3.1
Izvorni znanstveni rad
Primljeno: 7.10.2020.
Prihvaćeno: 3.6.2022.

The Re–Enchantment with the Buddhist Perspective on Phenomenal Consciousness in the Contemporary Philosophy of Mind

*Rajakishore Nath**

Abstract

The present paper is concerned with a qualitative, analytical, and comparative method of exploring Buddhist perspectives on phenomenal consciousness. The phenomenal consciousness sciences have offered a mechanical explanation of the 'how' and 'what' of consciousness, but have failed to explain the 'why' of consciousness. The Buddhists have given a systematic explanation of conscious experience in Pancha–skandha*, and it is in relation to the material world. In this scheme of things, consciousness is overly conditioned and arises from an interaction with other factors (physical or mental). Consciousness, in turn, influences one or more mental factors. Thus, consciousness and the mind–body* (nama–rupa) *are interdependent: there is no arising of consciousness without conditions. This is to say that there is an unbroken series of consciousnesses. I would like to demonstrate that the Buddhist notion of phenomenal consciousness not only goes against the possibility of a scientific explanation of phenomenal conscious experience but also establishes the philosophical grounds for the existence of a phenomenal conscious experience.*

Keywords: *Buddhism; naturalism; mind–body; phenomenal consciousness; conscious experience*

Introduction

I shall argue in this paper that the Buddhist explanation of consciousness does not fit into the functional/scientific/mechanical explanation of consciousness (Nath, 2017). The Buddhists have given a systematic explanation of conscious experience and of how it is related to the material world in *Pancha–skandha*. All these five aggregates are dependent causes and conditions. In this scheme of

* Rajakishore Nath, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai 400076, India. ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000–0003–0855–9709. E–mail: *rajakishorenath@iitb.ac.in*

things, consciousness is overly conditioned and arises out of an interaction with other factors (physical or mental). Consciousness, in turn, influences one or more mental factors. Thus, consciousness and the mind–body (*nama–rupa*) are interdependent: there is no arising of consciousness without conditions. This is why Buddhism's perspective on phenomenal consciousness involves experientially irreducible physical phenomena which Buddhists have explained in the Skandha. However, Buddhism did not define consciousness because it is indefinable and is, therefore, difficult to pinpoint. Nevertheless, in principle, Buddhism asserts that it is possible to recognize experientially what consciousness is and to identify it.

This paper aims to explore whether the truth about phenomenal consciousness is explained by the different models in science, and it offers a critical response from the Buddhist perspective. In the first section, I shall focus on the different sciences which have offered a causal explanation of the "how" and what' of consciousness, but have failed to explain the 'why' of consciousness. Their explanation is based on the grounds that consciousness is functionally dependent on the material universe, and that all conscious phenomena can be explained by mapping the physical universe. In the second section, I have critiqued the science of phenomenal consciousness from the Buddhist perspective. Furthermore, I conclude that the Buddhist notion of phenomenal consciousness not only goes against the possibility of a scientific explanation of consciousness, but also establishes the philosophical grounds for the conscious experience in this physical world.

1. The Science of Phenomenal Consciousness

1.1. The Artificial Model

AI explains the truth of the phenomenal consciousness in order to give a mechanistic explanation of the human mind. This is because the standard functionalist approach accepts only those things that fall within the scientific framework. Here, the main argument is that the functionalist theory of mind tries to fix the mental states' causal–functional role in the inputs' network and in the output of the machines' model. This shows that the mental states are so–called not because of their inherent mental quality but because of the causal role they play in the organisms' functional organization. Furthermore, this is true in the case of the multiple realizability thesis (Shoemaker, 1984).This implies a higher–level functional description of physical states in terms of their causal role, which abstracts from their lower–level physical constitution. It is with such functional properties that mental properties can be identified.

The main aim of AI is to produce machines with a mind. If we say that machines have minds, then we must ascribe to them certain properties such as "belief", "knowledge", "free will", "intention", "observations", etc. In this case, the machines will perform intelligent tasks and thus will behave like human beings. For Artificial Intelligence scientists, the mind is the software, and the brain

is the hardware in which the mind functions. Therefore, the central thesis of Artificial Intelligence is that the human brain is like a digital computer, and the human mind is just a computer program. It tries to prove that the relation between the programs and the computer hardware is like the relation between mind and brain (Nath, 2009a; 2005a). Some Artificial Intelligence scientists argue that we have every reason to believe that computers have intelligence. At the same time, others argue that a computer's intelligence is limited, whereas human intelligence has no limit. Nowadays, computers have achieved some modest success in proving theorems, guiding missiles, sorting mail, driving assembly–line robots, diagnosing illness, predicting weather and economic events, etc. Computers receive, interpret, process, store, manipulate, and use information. Thus, intelligent behaviour is programmed into the computers. On the other hand, we have no idea how the brain functions, but we do have an idea of the general relationships between brain processes and mental processes. Mental processes are caused by brain activities which are functions of the elements constituting the brain.

Moreover, Haugeland says that since a correct application of the rules of reason to particular thoughts depends on what those thoughts mean, it seems that there must be some active rule–applier which understands the thoughts (and rules), and which applies the rules to the thoughts as well as it can. If the activity of the rules, in following the rules of reason, is to explain the rationality of our thought process, then it must be regarded as a complete little person — or *homunculus* (in Latin) — inside the head directing thoughts like a traffic officer. The trouble is that a theory which involves a *homunculus* to explain thinking has begged its own question, because the *homunculus* itself needs to think, and this thinking process has not been explained (Haugeland, 1981, 3–4). However, cognitive scientists can be materialists and mentalists at the same time. They are materialists because they support the view that the mind is a complicated machine or matter.

According to Haugeland (1981, 4), »When the machine plays, it follows the rules in at least two senses: it always abides by the rules of the game, and it employs various reasonable rules of thumb to select plausible moves. Though these rules are in no way laws of nature, the machine's behaviour is explained (in part) by citing them, and yet no unexplained 'compunculus' is presupposed.« Thus, this explanation will necessarily invoke the system's internal reasoning processes, yet it is far from easy to figure out processes that will consistently lead to the observed behavioural response. Following Hagueland, Dennett (1981, 152–154) rightly says that the human mind is a semantic engine, that is to say that the way the human mind handles the meaning of a word or sentence, can be compared to the way in which a machine handles the literal meaning of a word or a sentence. Thus, Dennett's view shows that the human mind is a machine just like an ordinary machine because both mind and machine have the same quality. The difference is only apparent.

The supporters of strong AI say that there is a general agreement among them that it is only a matter of time until the computer scientists and the workers

in artificial intelligence design the appropriate hardware and programs, which will be the equivalent of human brains and minds. These will be artificial brains and minds which are, in every way, the equivalents of human brains and minds (Nath, 2004). As Searle (1996, 29) cited Herbert Simon views, »We already have machines that can literally think. There is no question of waiting for some future machine, because existing digital computers already have the same sense that you and I do.« That is, the idea of a thinking machine is no longer a dream, but a reality. Hence, there exists a very much prevalent legitimacy for strong artificial intelligence.

1.2. The Naturalistic Model

As we have already discussed, AI scientists reduce intentionality to mechanical processes. According to the instrumentalists, we can attribute intentionality to a mechanical system since the machine can have an intentional stance. As Dennett (1981, 7) points out, »the definition of intentional systems I have given does not say that intentional systems really have beliefs and desires, but that one can explain and predict their behaviour by *ascribing* beliefs and desires to them.« Against this, however, Searle has argued that intentionality cannot be reduced to the brain's causal processes since it is a part of consciousness. Intentional mental phenomena are part of our natural biological life history. As Searle (2002, 79) puts it, »Intentional phenomena, like other biological phenomena, are real intrinsic features of certain biological organisms in the same way that mitosis, meiosis and the secretion of bile are real intrinsic features of certain biological organisms.« For Searle, human beings have certain intrinsic intentional states, which are caused by processes in the nervous systems of these organisms, and they are realized in the structure of these nervous systems. He advocates what is called biological naturalism, according to which the mind is real in the natural world. To demonstrate that intentionality is biological is to demonstrate that it is intrinsic to the mind naturally rather than derived from any other source. This happens as a matter of biological evolution which is a natural feature of the universe. This entails a form of property–dualism in the Cartesian tradition which accepts the mind as an emergent property of the natural order. The Searlean model of the mind proposes that the mind cannot be understood unless we posit intentionality as an irreducible feature of the mind.

However, Searle's naturalistic model of intentionality has much to explain: namely, how can intentionality have a place in nature if we understand nature to be a system of unconscious physical processes? Intentionality is a feature of consciousness and therefore is not attributable to physical processes. In this case, it will be compared to any other process, mental or physical. Searle still needs to answer how intentional states such as hope and desire can be physical processes. This is where the non–naturalists have a point. They make the claim that intentionality is a unique feature of consciousness that refuses to be assimilated into the natural order in the way that Searle describes this assimilation. If intentionality is real, it must be distinguishable from the natural order and must be explainable

independently of the natural order. The above critique on intentionality shows that the naturalistic model of mind has its limitations because it wants to put all the world's entities in one basket, both mental and non–mental. This paradoxical monism does an injustice to mental reality because it robs it of its unique character.

Like Searle, Chalmers has also argued that no reductive explanation of consciousness is possible because consciousness logically does not supervene on the physical facts. According to him, consciousness is "naturally supervenient" but not "logically supervenient" on the physical facts. His argument is that consciousness is different from all other properties, including biological properties such as life. For example, in the case of a zombie, however, the physical features of a human organism are present, yet it lacks consciousness. In Chalmers's words, »the logical possibility of zombie seems equally obvious to me. A zombie is just something physical identical to me, but which has no conscious experience — all is dark inside« (Chalmers, 1996, 96). The physical identity between a zombie and a human being does not entail the zombie's being conscious. Thus, we have to accept that there is an explanatory gap between physical processes and mental processes which we will explore in the next section. According to strong AI, machines such as computers have intelligence, though they have no consciousness. Nevertheless, the question is: do computers have intelligence? In a derivative sense, yes, but that does not make them have a conscious, intentional experience. This raises the possibility that intelligence, cognition, and information processing do not require consciousness. This is so because there are only input–output functions, and these do not require consciousness.

1.3. Conscious Inessentialism

In reaction to the above point, Flanagan (1992, 6) argues, »I reject conscious inessentialism. Consciousness is essentially involved in being intelligent and purposeful in the way(s) in which we are. Computational functionalism, in part because it normally involves commitment to conscious inessentialism, is the wrong sort of functionalism for the philosopher of psychology to be committed to.« Flanagan considers that, if machines are not conscious, this does not mean that human beings are not conscious. It is consciousness which marks the distinction between minds and machines. Again, it is consciousness which accounts for the first person or subjective experience. Machines lack consciousness as they are designed to function mechanically.

It is important to discuss the relationship between consciousness and free will in this connection. It is not easy to prove that one is impossible without the other, but it is certain that we cannot prove that a robot is conscious, and that it has free will. We have a complete causal explanation of all its behaviour, and this explanation does not at any stage depend on its consciousness, therefore its behaviour cannot be proof of the possession of consciousness. Consciousness is not a property that can be detected in a machine by a physical examination because it cannot be identified with any physical characteristics. However, a conscious

robot is 'just' an assemblage of more elementary artefacts, silicon chips, etc. Therefore, it has no element of consciousness and free will in it.

Firstly, machines are purely material things, and consciousness requires immaterial mind–stuff. Furthermore, mental states and events are a product of the brain's operation, but the program is not a product of the computer in this sense. Secondly, a machine is inorganic, and consciousness can exist only in an organic brain. It is not that consciousness is necessary to explain certain behaviour in machines. Although one may feel that consciousness can go along with the machines' actions, it does not follow from this: consciousness accompanies them. The machine that seems to use the word "conscious" correctly does so simply because it is programmed in a certain way. Machines remain lifeless and inert devices, even if they are manipulated intelligently by their human designers. A robot is simply a machine which is essentially distinct from the human in its behavioural aspects. Hence, humans, and not robots, are conscious.

However, there are cases whereby it is very difficult to decide the question of consciousness, e.g., bacteria, jellyfish, etc., which are unlike stones, stopwatches, and computers in certain respects. In these cases, it is difficult to say whether these organisms have minds like ours. As we know, some qualities that belong to human minds do not belong to any other organism (Nath, 2005b). In contrast to this, however, a conscious machine's idea is a contradiction in terms because the word "conscious" stands for something natural, and the word "machine" stands for something artificial. It is absurd to say that machines are conscious. Thus, the idea of machine consciousness is at best a derivative concept, and at worst, a self–contradictory notion.

As we have already seen, the way AI explained the concept of consciousness is very mechanical and artificial. It explains consciousness in terms of the brain's computational functions, and so it fails to account for the creative features of consciousness. Consciousness, along with its semantic properties, remains autonomous as far as the mental domain is concerned. Cognitivism's explanation of the inner world eliminates the very notion of consciousness and its semantic features. According to cognitivism, there is no distinction between the mind and its mental activities and the mechanical functions of the brain. Consciousness is not essential for this physical world, but the Buddhist will not agree with this because Buddhist philosophy offers a characterization of consciousness that centres on its phenomenal character. This phenomenal character is not available in the AI perspective of consciousness.

1.4. Conscious Experience

The "hard" problem of consciousness, as Chalmers has shown, is the problem of experience, especially to the first–person character, which cannot be explained within a scientific framework. Cognitive science can explain a system's functions in terms of its internal mechanism, but it is not possible to explain what it is to have subjective experiences because this is not a problem of the functions' performance. As Nagel (1998, 519) argues, »conscious experience is a widespread

phenomenon… fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism — something it is like *for* the organism.« In recent times, all sorts of mental phenomena have yielded scientific explanations, but consciousness has stubbornly resisted such explanations.

Moreover, many philosophers and scientists have tried to explain this, but the explanations always seem to fall short of the target. Now the question is: why is it so difficult to explain? According to Chalmers, cognitive science has not explained why there is a conscious experience at all. When we think and perceive, there is a whirl of information processing, but subjective individual aspects of consciousness go beyond information processing. Chalmers writes (1997, 12–13), »What makes the hard problem hard and almost unique is that it goes beyond problems about the performance of functions. To see this, note that even when we have explained the performance of all the cognitive and behavioral functions in the vicinity of experience — perceptual discrimination, categorization, internal access, verbal report — there may still remain a further unanswered question: *Why is the performance of these functions accompanied by experience?*« According to him, even if all the functions of a system are well articulated, there is a further question as to why there is any experience at all accompanying their function. Cognitive science fails to explain why there is any experience at all, even though it explains all the brain functions.

As David Chalmers has formulated, the »hard problem of consciousness« has many ontological implications and also implications regarding the larger metaphysical picture of the universe. However, Chalmers keeps his theory of consciousness within the naturalistic framework because, according to him, scientific law will be able to explain consciousness one day. As Pradhan (2009) says, »If the hard problem could be solved by science by discovering many new facts about the human brain, then it will collapse into an easy problem.« However, there are no metaphysics in Chalmers' hard problem of consciousness because its nature is only relative. That is to say, it is hard relative to the current knowledge of the cognitive sciences which are engaged in decoding consciousness' structure. Thus, the easy–hard distinction is basically an epistemological distinction and not an ontological one (Pradhan, 2002). Whether there is a deeper aspect of consciousness or not, it is not clear that the naturalistic explanation of consciousness is only about a fragment of consciousness. That is, explaining only how the brain states are causally connected with the conscious states is not enough. There are more problems with consciousness than science can solve. This is so because the methods of science are naturalistic in character, and hence science treats mind and consciousness as natural phenomena. If the world is taken as a closed system, then consciousness itself must be placed in the system bound by physical laws. If this is the case, then the question is: is consciousness a natural phenomenon? However, this is not the case. Again, it is very difficult to avoid the metaphysical implication underlying the very idea of a hard problem of consciousness. This is because the hard problem's global nature follows from the fact that it is a funda-

mental problem which is deeply entrenched in human understanding because we have not so far discovered how consciousness has emerged from physical consciousness. Chalmers admits that this is because of the fundamental principles of conscious experiences.

While disagreeing with Chalmers' view of consciousness, I would like to point out that Chalmers' conscious mind is less discussed because of his overt concern with the emergence of consciousness rather than the conscious mind (Nath, 2006). It is because of the fact that the naturalistic dualism of Chalmers seems to favour a physically closed universe since its basic psychophysical laws assume that the largely physical world is closed under physical laws. As I have mentioned earlier, no metaphysically inclined system could be complete without introducing the mind. A purely scientific theory of consciousness need not discuss mind, but if one speaks of a fundamental theory such as Chalmers', one cannot avoid the metaphysical problem of the mind. In that particular system, if consciousness is real, then the conscious subject will remain real as the bedrock of conscious experiences. Therefore, consciousness is, in no case, a product of matter. It is consciousness which produces the idea of a material world. There is no reason why matter is to be postulated as the central feature of the world. The higher–order experiences demand an autonomous domain which requires a mind in the metaphysical sense.

2. The Buddhist Perspective of Phenomenal Consciousness

The Buddhist perspective of phenomenal consciousness demonstrates that functionalism does not work for the reason that type–identification of the mental with the functional states cannot be established since the same mental states could be realized in different functional systems. This is also true in the case of the multiple realizability thesis, which states that the mental states of being in pain can be realized not only in the human functional system but also in a system made of silicon chips. This shows that the functional systems could vary in their inner structure and yet manifest the same mental state, say pain. Thus, the multiple realizability theses invalidate not only physicalism, but also functionalism. Again, the Buddhist five aggregates serve as a useful theoretical resource for developing a phenomenal consciousness structure. These five aggregates play a part in the cognitive process as well as in the formation of the mental process of the individual. In the *Pāli* texts, the five aggregates (*khandhas*) are listed as *rūpa* (matter), *vedanā* (feelings), *saṁkhāra* (volition), *saññā* (ideas), and *viññāṇa* (pure sensation or general consciousness) (Bhattacharya, 1933, 98–102). We will see that interpreting the *khandhas* raises philosophical issues that directly connect with contemporary debates about phenomenal consciousness, and at the same time, they limit the mechanistic theory of phenomenal consciousness.

2.1. The Basic Position of Buddhist Theories of Mind

The basic position of Buddhist theories of mind is at odds with a number of views commonly held in Western philosophical traditions. The Buddhist theories of designation by provisional naming (*prajñapti*) and relative truth (*samvrtti-satyatva*) clearly reveal that the Buddhist distinction between mind and body is mainly for the sake of facilitating discourse. I further discuss both the Buddhist viewpoint of non–duality based on the theory of the middle–way and the connection between mind and karma related to the mind–body problem. Although the mind–body distinction appears to be a kind of practical dualism, on the level of ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*), Buddhism advocates neither mind–body dualism nor non–dualism and is therefore perhaps better referred to as "conventional dualism". On the one hand, there is a third–person inquiry into the relationship between mind and body, and on the other hand, the axiological first–person approach is employed in Buddhist theory and practice (Lin, 2013). Buddhists explained that *rūpa* stands for the physical matter of the body. However, in *Pāli* language, this term connotes not only the body's solidity and extension, but also its mobility, temperature regulation, fluid, and digestive systems, as well as its processes of decay. It is like a biological system with life. It is better to say that *rūpais* better understood as referring to the living body rather than simply a machine, which science explainsas the concept of body. This is because of the fact that the concept of *nāma* is associated with *rūpa*. In Buddhism, *nāma–rūpa* stands for the mind–body human being or the totality of physical and mental processes that constitute the individual persona. The term '*nāma*' can be translated in English as "mind", but according to Buddhists, mind means conscious experience. This conscious experience gives rise to many mental faculties like feelings, ideas, volition, thinking, etc.

The second aggregate is *vedanā*. The *vedanā* is defined as feeling pleasure, feeling pain, or feeling neither–pleasure–nor–pain. In the third aggregate, the Buddhist defined *saññā* as cognizing (*sañjānāti*) that there is blue, that there is red, yellow, or white. These ideas clearly refer to some kind of knowledge or knowing which is done in an associative manner with other mental activities. The fourth aggregate is *saṁkhāra* which is understood as comprising all volitional activities. In this, the activities include volitional acts that lead to outward action or what we normally think of as the will. However, they also include more internal processes, such as attention, *manasikāra* — literally, "making–in–the–mind" (Davis & Thompson, 2013). Thus, we can understand *saṁkhāra* as referring to implicit and habitual processing routines which shape how we perceive and behave and which typically escape explicit, cognitive awareness. Importantly, these habits of mind not only shape our inner and outer actions but are themselves formed through the repetition of certain kinds of inner and outer volitional activities.

The fifth aggregate is known as *viññāṇa*, which is defined as consciousness. This is the core level consciousness, which stands in contrast to the more cognitive functions that allow one to identify, recall, and report what one experiences.

This conscious experience, defined as a moment of visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, and mental awareness, would be analogous to phenomenal consciousness, whereas *saññā*, defined as a recognitional ability, would be analogous to cognitive access. This is very much related to the basal level of awareness common to all phenomenally conscious states (Harvey, 1995).

However, all these aggregates are very much related to the Four Noble Truths: the truths of suffering, the source of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to that cessation (Radhakrishnan, 2008, 525–577). While Buddhist thinkers have always placed primary emphasis on understanding the nature of the mind, their orientation to this endeavor has been fundamentally pragmatic. The first noble truth formulates the problem to be addressed. The second noble truth presents the hypothesis that the essential causes of suffering are to be found within the mind, specifically in terms of cognitive, emotional, and attentional imbalances. The third noble truth hypothesizes that these afflictive tendencies can be irreversibly dispelled from the mind. Finally, the fourth noble truth presents detailed procedures for collecting data by observing mental processes and experimenting with techniques for transforming the mind and eliminating its afflictive elements (Radhakrishnan, 2008, 525–577).

2.2. The Self

According to Buddha, the five aggregates are dependent causes and conditions. In this scheme of things, consciousness is overly conditioned and arises out of an inter action with other factors (physical or mental). Consciousness, in turn, influences one or more mental factors. Thus, consciousness and the mind–body (*nāma–rūpa*) are interdependent: there is no consciousness arising without conditions. Thus, the human being or self is primarily conceptualized into the five constituents of the self. It is important to point out that the analysis of the self into different components is meant to be complete. If the complete analysis of the self into a fixed number of constituents is in place, the question concerning the relationship between these constituents and the self that they comprise naturally arises (Westerhoff, 2009, 155). Also, the Buddhists observe that the self could be identical with the constituents. The self could exist as a separate entity distinct from any constituents, it could contain the constituents as an integral part, or finally, it could itself be a part of the constituents. These are the four ways in which the self could be explained (Nath, 2018).

Although Buddhists deny the existence of any kind of substantial self, he (Buddha) is not denying the properties of conscious activities such as seeing, desiring, believing, and so on. However, as we know, these activities are present in a "subject" or an "I" which is conscious or has a mind and which possesses knowledge and beliefs about the world. Thus, the nature of mental phenomena such as consciousness, belief, and knowledge are such that they demand a subject to which they are attributable and without which they remain unintelligible. Concepts like consciousness, belief, desire, and knowledge are such that they immediately raise such questions as: whose knowledge? whose desire? The-

se questions cannot be answered unless we introduce a self or subject. According to Matilal (1989), »A sort of robust realism dictates that the substance or substratum must be distinguished from the features, properties, or qualities it holds. This world requires a substratum for the so–called mental episodes and dispositions, awareness, desires, performances, etc., and the body, because of its continuously changing nature, cannot be regarded as adequate for such substratumhood.« Here, robust realism is a kind of strong realism, which asserts the reality of the mind–independent object. The object does not depend on the mind of the subject. Buddhists strongly criticized any kind of realism which plays an important role in recent developments in analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy, in general, accepts the claim that »most current common–sense and scientific physical existence statements are objectively and mind–independently (deflationary) true« (Devitt, 1991, 41). This means that things or objects exist in a mind–independent *svabhāva*. Even though the Buddhist's "mind–dependence" does not refer to any kind of solipsism, a collective dependence on all minds exists. This fact we know from the Buddhist's elimination of existence by *svabhāva*: causation, change, the self, knowledge, language, etc.

The above Buddhist explanation on the nature of consciousness is very important because the Buddhist explanation is very much related to the first–person perspective of phenomenal consciousness, and this is different from the third–person perspective of consciousness. The third–person perspective presents an objective picture of consciousness purely from an impersonal point of view. That is why it cannot present the raw feeling of experience. The first–person point of view associates the phenomenon of consciousness with the conscious subject. That is to say; consciousness is grounded in the very nature of the conscious being. So, being conscious has to be understood from the subjective point of view of a conscious being. Therefore, consciousness is subjective. This is not a mechanistic/scientific state, as many philosophers believe. Some of these biological systems are conscious, and this consciousness is essentially subjective. The term "pain" is subjective as it is not accessible to any observer because it is a first–person experience. For example, I feel pain in my leg. In this case, the statement is completely subjective. The pain itself has a subjective mode of existence. The subjective consciousness is a troublesome feature that encompasses our feelings, thinking, and perception. The qualitative character of experience is what it is like for its subject to have the experience (Nagel, 1998, 519). As Searle (2002, 40) puts it, »Conscious states exist only when they are experienced by some human or animal subject. In that sense, they are essentially subjective. I used to treat subjectivity and qualitativeness as distinct features, but it now seems to me that properly understood, qualitativeness implies subjectivity because, in order for there to be a qualitative feel to some event, there must be some subject that experiences the event. No subjectivity, no experience.« I think Buddhists may agree on this, but many Buddhists may disagree with my view.

2.3. Subjective Phenomenal Experience

The subjective phenomenal experience is known as qualia (Chalmers, 1996, 4). And the qualia are the intrinsic quality of conscious experience. For example, the experience of tasting a sweet is very different from that of watching a movie because both of these have a different qualitative character of experience. This shows that there are different qualitative features of conscious experience. That is why we cannot derive the pleasure of eating sweets by watching movies and vice versa. However, functionalists such as Dennett have argued for eliminating qualia from the discourse of mind. The basic reason for this functionalist attitude is that they consider the mind to be a machine: it cannot entertain the so–called qualitative, subjective experiences called the qualia. We have to show that the mentality of the human mind cannot be represented within a mechanistic model, and that there are subjective mental states which require the first–person explanation.

According to Dennett, "qualia are supposed to be properties of a subject that are (1) ineffable, (2) intrinsic, (3) private, (4) directly or immediately appraisable in consciousness" (Dennett, 1998, 621–622). Qualia are ineffable because one cannot say exactly in whatmanner one is currently seeing, tasting, smelling, and so forth. The reason why qualia are ineffable is that they are intrinsic properties, which seems to imply *inter alia* that they are somehow atomic and unanalyzable. Since they are simple, there is nothing to catch hold of when one is trying to describe such properties. Since qualia are ineffable and intrinsic, qualia are private because all interpersonal comparisons of these appearing are systematically impossible. Lastly, since they are properties of experiences, qualia are directly accessible to the consciousness since qualia are properties of one's experiences which are immediately apprehensible in consciousness. Then, the claim about the *Robo–Buddha* might be no more than a way of saying that the skillful practiced instructor will spontaneously and smoothly give the student just the right bit of instruction on any given case. No thought being required, there is no need to generate the otherwise useful illusion of thought–the illusion that there is a private realm of subjectivity (Siderits, 2011). However, qualia constitute the phenomenal structure of the mind in that they enrich our understanding of the mind and also provide clues to the ontology of the mental. What the mental ultimately is, as distinguished from the physical, is to be known from what the qualia reveal about the mind. Therefore, qualia play a very important role in the understanding of the mind (Nath, 2009b).

I think that Buddhists will not agree with Dennett's conception of phenomenal experience. This is because of the fact that the Buddhist notion of phenomenal experience is not private and effable. Even if the notion of privacy, as we know from Wittgenstein's private language argument, does not apply to qualia in the sense that qualia are intersubjectively intelligible and that they are available for inter–personal communication. The qualia of colour–perception are such that any two persons belonging to the same linguistic community can easily communicate their colour–experiences and can understand each other well. This

shows that qualia, in spite of being subjective, are not private at all. As to their effability or ineffability, it goes without saying that they are expressible in an interpersonal language which is why they are accessible to all speakers if they are suitably placed. Thus, Dennett's main argument that qualia are inaccessible to all except to the subject of the qualia does not hold true and defines subjectivity without the subject.

Again, Dennett's argument that phenomenal experiences are atomistic and non–relational is equally weak for the reason that subjective experiences need not be atomistic at all because they can be taken as constituting the stream of consciousness in that they constitute a single unbroken series of conscious experiences, which Buddhists have been arguing for. Buddhists accept the concept of rebirth principally on account of the continuity of consciousness. Thus, Consciousness is not isolated from other factors and has no independent existence. It is not located in a particular part of the body and does not arise out of matter. It is conditioned by four other aggregates. In this sense, qualia are holistic rather than atomistic. The fact of the matter is that qualia never exist in isolation and are always in a constellation. For example, the colour experience of a red rose is not only that of the colour red but also of the rosebush/rose blossom of a certain shape and size. Here, the two experiences do not stand apart but constitute one whole. It is important to point out that in Buddhism, the mind–body relation is not a dualistic one, but rather mind–body interacts together in mutual dependency as different aspects of the whole.

According to the Buddhist, extrasensory perceptual experience is taken to be part of all other facets of experience. In the West, the belief prevails that consciousness is everywhere and this thesis is known as panpsychism. Panpsychism, the idea of universal consciousness, is prominent thought in some branches of ancient Greek philosophy, paganism, and Buddhism, and it has been largely dismissed by modern science (Littlefair, 2017). Interesting observations about the contribution of Buddhist thought to cognitive science always involve an acknowledgment of the difference between the two systems. Exercises in comparative philosophy expose substantial differences between Buddhistic and scientific motivations. For example, they (the Buddhists) expose that the approach to emptiness selfhood in Nāgārjuna's philosophy is embedded within a wider ethical and stereological (soteriological) concern, while cognitive science is motivated by curiosity and usually remains silent about all these issues.

Buddhists recognize consciousness, not as *cogito*, but as part of the human personality conditioned by various factors. The Buddhist argues that it is possible to account for self–awareness, as long as we give up the conception of the substantial self. According to Westerhoff (2009), if we conceive of the self as a temporally stretched–out compound of psychological events, then there is no fundamental difficulty that the same type of event turns up on the cognizing subject's side on one occasion and on the cognized object's side on another. Given that there is no unified substratum constituting the self, there is also no necessity for something to be essentially a subject of experience. As different parts can play

different roles at different times, our self–knowledge can be explained just by a momentary identification with a mental event which presently functions as a cognizing subject. It is important to point out here that ownership is not applicable in the case of a Buddhist interpretation of consciousness because Buddhists do not believe in the substantial notion of subject/self, but this does not mean that phenomenal consciousness can be explained from a scientific point of view.

Conclusion

From the above philosophical argument, it follows that any scientific theories of mind in all their hues face questions on how we can account for the qualitative content of our consciousness. It cannot ultimately tell us the truth about how phenomenal consciousnesses are possible nor that qualia can be real in this universe. Consciousness, including Buddhist phenomenal consciousness, obviously does not fall within a scientific framework; therefore, it (consciousness) is excluded from scientific discourse. Hence, the Buddhist notion of phenomenal consciousness not only goes against the possibility of a scientific explanation of consciousness but also establishes the philosophical grounds for the conscious experience in the physical world.

Bibliography

Bhattacharya, Vidhushekhara (1933). *The Basic Conception of Buddhism*. New Delhi: Universal Voice.

Chalmers, David (1996). *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. New York: Oxford University.

Chalmers, David (1997). Facing up to the problem of consciousness. In Jonathan Shear (Ed.), *Explaining Consciousness: The Hard Problem* (pp. 9–32). Cambridge: MIT.

Davis, Jake H.; Thompson, Evan (2013). From the Five Aggregates to Phenomenal Consciousness: Towards a Cross–Cultural Cognitive Science. In Steven M. Emmanuel (Ed.), *A Companion to Buddhist Study* (pp. 585–597). UK: Wiley–Blackwell.

Dennett, Daniel C. (1981). *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*. Cambridge: MIT.

Dennett, Daniel C. (1998). Quining Qualia. In N. Block, O. Flanagan & G. Güzeldere (Eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness* (pp. 619–642). Cambridge: MIT.

Devitt, Michael (1991). *Realism and Truth*. New Jersey: Princeton University

Flanagan, Owen (1992). *Consciousness Reconsidered*. Cambridge: MIT.

Harvey, Peter (1995). *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism*. London: Routledge.

Haugeland, John (1981). Semantic Engines: An Introduction to Mind Design. In John Haugeland (Ed.), *Mind Design* (pp. 1–34). Cambridge: MIT.

Lin, Chien–Te (2013). Rethinking mind–body dualism: A Buddhist take on the mind–body problem. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 14(2), pp. 239–264.

Littlefair, Sam (2017). Leading neuroscientists and Buddhists agree: "Consciousness is everywhere". *Lion' Roar*, January 8. https://www.lionsroar.com/christof–koch–unites–buddhist–neuroscience–universal–nature–mind/ (accessed on 12th August 2019)

Matilal, Bimal Krishna (1989). Nyāya critique of the Buddhist doctrine of non–soul. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 17(1), pp. 61–79.

Nagel, Thomas (1998). What is it like to be a bat. In N. Block, O. Flanagan & G. Güzeldere (Eds.), *The Nature of Consciousness* (pp. 519–527). Cambridge: MIT.

Nath, Rajakishore (2004). Mind: A connectionist model. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 21(3), pp. 43–62.

Nath, Rajakishore (2005a). Early and later Putnam on Functionalism. *Sandhān: Journal of Center for Studies in Civilizations*, 5 (2), pp. 53–64.

Nath, Rajakishore (2005b). A non–materialistic view of person. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 22(2), pp. 122–137.

Nath, Rajakishore (2006). Emergence of consciousness shows the hardness of the hard problem of consciousness. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 23(2), pp. 167–181.

Nath, Rajakishore (2009a). *Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence: A Critique of the Mechanistic Theory of Mind*. Florida: Universal Publishers.

Nath, Rajakishore (2009b). Machine intelligence (MI), competence and creativity. *AI & Society*, 23(3), pp. 441–458.

Nath, Rajakishore (2017). Can naturalism explain consciousness?: A critique. *AI & Society*, 32(4), pp. 563–571.

Nath, Rajakishore (2018). The problem of self in Nagarjuna's philosophy: a contemporaryperspective. *AI and Society*, 33(4), pp. 537–543.

Pradhan, R. C. (2002). Why Qualia Cannot be Quined. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 19(2), pp. 85–102.

Pradhan, R. C. (2009). Hard Problem of Consciousness? Revisiting D. Chalmers. *Indian Journal of Analytic Philosophy*, 3(1), pp 66–87.

Radhakrishnan, S. (2008). *Indian Philosophy: Volume: 1*. New Delhi: Oxford University.

Searle, John R. (1996). *Minds, Brains and Science*. New York: Harvard University.

Searle, John R. (2002). *Consciousness and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Shoemaker, Sydney (1984). *Identity, Cause and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Siderits, Mark (2011). Buddhas as Zombies: A Buddhist Reduction of Subjectivity. In M. Siderits, E. Thompson, & D. Zahavi (Eds.), *Self, No Self? Perspective from Analytical, Phenomenological, & Indian Traditions* (pp. 308–332). Oxford: Oxford University.

Westerhoff, Jan (2009). *Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University.

Novi interes za budističku perspektivu fenomenalne svjesnosti u modernoj filozofiji uma

Rajakishore Nath[*]

Sažetak

U ovom radu se koristi kvalitativna, analitička i komparativna metoda radi istraživanja budističke perspektive fenomenalne svjesnosti. Znanosti fenomenalne svjesnosti ponudile su mehaničko objašnjenje o tom što je svjesnost i kako funkcionira, ali nisu uspjele objasniti zašto postoji svjesnost. Budisti su ponudili sistematsko tumačenje svjesnoga iskustva u Pancha–skandha–i *u odnosu na materijalni svijet. Prema njihovu sustavu, svjesnost biva prekomjerno uvjetovana te proizlazi iz interakcije s drugim čimbenicima (fizičkim ili mentalnim). Svjesnost pak utječe na jedan ili više mentalnih čimbenika. Stoga svjesnost i um–tijelo* (nama–rupa) *jesu međuovisni. Ne postoji podizanje svjesnosti bez uvjeta. To znači da postoji neprekinuti niz svjesnosti. Želio bih pokazati da budistički pojam fenomenalne svjesnosti ne samo da negira mogućnost znanstvenoga tumačenja fenomenalne svjesnosti nego utvrđuje filozofsku utemeljenost postojanja iskustva fenomenalne svjesnosti.*

Ključne riječi: *budizam; naturalizam; um–tijelo; fenomenalna svjesnost;* qualia

[*] Prof. dr. sc. Rajakishore Nath, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai 400076, Indija. E–adresa: *rajakishorenath@iitb.ac.in*