

The Hard Problem

(but not that hard)

Mike Arnautov

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

‘...the so-called “hard problem” (Chalmers 1995) which is more or less that of giving an intelligible account that lets us see in an intuitively satisfying way how phenomenal or “what it's like” consciousness might arise from physical or neural processes in the brain.’

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- **Current physics?**

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- Current physics?
- **Completed physics?**

Main Hard Problem arguments

Phenomenal consciousness and qualia

Philosophical zombies

Qualia (singular: quale)

- qualities of phenomenal experience
- the 'what it is like' character of mental states
- the introspectively accessible, specific 'something' making e.g. perception of red colour what it is

Stanford on qualia

- phenomenal character of experience
- properties of sense data
- intrinsic, non-representational properties
- intrinsic, non-physical, ineffable properties

Thought experiment 1

Mary, the shockingly mistreated colour scientist

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Knowing all there is to know scientifically, Mary still learns something new on seeing a red rose.
R.I.P. physicalism.

First objection:

Practicalities of eliminating colour experience

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Trivially answered?

The strange case of 'Martian Colours'

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A colour-blind patient

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A colour-blind patient
who happens to be synaesthetic!

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Does his brain *manufacture* qualia?

Second objection:

What Mary learns is specific to her

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Uniqueness of individual brains
and experiences

‘What-it-is-like’ of experience

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Why does red look like... red?

‘What-it-is-like’ of experience

Why does red look like... red?

Well, how else should it look?

Evolutionary purposes of experience

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Experiences have to be differentiated

Evolutionary purposes of experience

Experiences have to be differentiated

Experiences do not 'present' themselves

But why **conscious** experience?

But why **conscious** experience?

That's a good question

Does intelligence require consciousness?

What is consciousness?

Access consciousness and
phenomenal consciousness

Thought experiment 2

Philosophical zombies

Thought experiment 2

Philosophical zombies

(Die, zombie, die!!)

Zombies are just like humans in all physical and behavioural aspects, but lack phenomenal consciousness

Zombies are just like humans in all physical and behavioural aspects, but lack phenomenal consciousness

They are imaginable
therefore (?)
they are possible
R.I.P. physicalism

Objection 1

Since when does imaginability entails possibility?

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Why is it so difficult to find counter-examples?

Objection 2: question begging

Physical characteristics of a human are
insufficient to produce phenomenal experience

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Physical characteristics of a human are
insufficient to produce phenomenal experience

Inverting the argument leads to the opposite
conclusion

Objection 3:

How do I know my listeners are not zombies?

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How do I know my listeners are not zombies?

How do I know I am not a zombie?

Chalmers' response:

Zombies believe they are not zombies
but their belief is false

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It lacks the validating 'direct experience'
of phenomenal consciousness

Suppose I am a zombie

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If Chalmers waves a magic wand to
de-zombify me

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What would change?

In summary: the zombie argument

- Conflates conceivable with possible
- Begs the question
- Appears to reduce to mere semantics
- Assumes privilege of “direct experience”

If the direct experience claim is wrong,
are there any alternative proposals?

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are there any alternative proposals?

My favourite: Global Working Space
(badly misnamed)

Consciousness should be thought of in terms of competition between non-conscious subsystems for a limited capacity, which broadcasts information for wide access and use

Extreme version:

Consciousness has no executive powers

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Consciousness has no executive powers

(but I am still in charge!)

Thank you for listening!