

**Consciousness:
The Meta-Problem and Its Implications**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of
Master of Philosophy (Arts) in Philosophy of Jadavpur
University**

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Session: 2017-2019

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Certified that the Thesis entitled, **Consciousness: The Meta-Problem and Its Implications**, submitted by me towards the partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (Arts) in Philosophy of Jadavpur University, is based upon my own original work and there is no plagiarism. This is also to certify that the work has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same Institution where the work is carried out, or to any other Institution. A paper out of this dissertation has also been presented by me at a seminar/conference at Centre for Phenomenological Studies, thereby fulfilling the criteria for submission, as per the M.Phil Regulation (2017) of Jadavpur University.

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On the basis of academic merit and satisfying all the criteria as declared above, the dissertation work of **Biplab Karak** entitled **Consciousness: The Meta-Problem and Its Implications**, is now ready for submission towards the partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (Arts) in Philosophy of Jadavpur University.

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Preface

The problem of consciousness, for me, has been an important philosophical issue ever since I came to know about it from my MA special paper classes at Presidency University. We all know that we are conscious, but we hardly know what consciousness as a phenomenon exactly is. Philosophers and scientists have been trying to understand this phenomenon in their own peculiar ways, right from the inception of their respective disciplines. Yet it is not fully or properly understood. Consciousness seems hard to explain. That is both a riveting and a despondent fact about consciousness research. It is due to this enigmatic and mysterious nature of the phenomenon of consciousness that I felt the urge to do research on it.

For writing this dissertation I have been blessed enough to have help in various forms from many people and I would like to extend my thanks to them. First of all, I am enormously indebted to my supervisor Dr. Maushumi Guha, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, without whose strict supervision and scholarly advice, writing this dissertation would have never been possible.

I am also extremely grateful to my maa, Mrs. Rina Karak, who always encourages me to pursue my dreams, and to my baba Mr. Gopal

Karak, who always supports me. Their blessings have been a special and constant source of inspiration for me to keep on going and growing.

Last but not the least, I am grateful to the Almighty for always being with me and for all the blessings and love He sprinkled on me.

Chapter One

Introduction

What is at the core of human existence? What is the essence of human beings, which makes them what they are? What is that thing, without which, human beings will cease to exist as the beings that they are? Do we have any satisfactory answer to these questions from a philosophical point of view at least, if not from any empirical point of view? These are some of the questions, which haunt philosophers (and everyone), who take up the task of understanding reality (of course in a way typical of them and of the discipline they belong to) very seriously, rather than trying to make the reality fit anyway into the structure of their belief system.

The abovementioned questions allude to one of the central problems of philosophy of mind, regarding consciousness. Descartes was the first-person in the history of modern western philosophy to clearly point out the problem of consciousness and formulate it in a manner which is easily understandable. This problem is highly nuanced and thus can be seen from various perspectives and can be related to various other problems. In search of the indubitable certain truth, Descartes using his method of doubt, discovered that the very fact that 'one doubts' cannot be doubted by that person who doubts as it involves contradiction, and for that person in order

to be able to doubt, must exist as the necessary prerequisite for the possibility of the activity of doubting. So, for Descartes, this 'I', who doubts (and also performs other tasks, such as, it believes, ponders over things etc.) is at the core of human existence, which makes the human beings what they are by being their essence and gives meaning to human existence or makes human existence meaningful. Now, once Descartes was done with the task of identifying the essence of human beings, he tried to understand what the nature of this 'I' is, and how the actual beings (which are the amalgamation of a lot of other things besides the essence) are related to it. And there he found this 'I' to be identical with the mind, the essence of which is thinking, as contrasted with the body, whose essence is extension. Mind cannot exist without thinking, while body cannot exist without being extended in space. This paved the way for one of the classical problems of philosophy of mind, that is, the problem of mind-body interactionism.

The reasons I started with the discussion of the problem of the mind-body interactionism are two. First of all, it is because Descartes is widely accepted as the first philosopher in modern western philosophy to formally introduce the problem of mind or consciousness and second of all, the problem of consciousness is accepted by many philosophers as the modern day version of Descartes' problem of mind-body interactionism.¹ This is

¹ Susan Blackmore, *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

because in both the cases, the problem concerns knowing how something (consciousness) can interact with or can emerge out of something else (body/physical states), when they seem to be diametrically opposed to each other.

Generally, in philosophy, 'mind' and 'consciousness' may be treated as synonymous, although in a very loose sense. Because consciousness is accepted, although not unanimously, to be the essence or the essential feature of mind. Without consciousness, mind is nothing and the vice versa. So, even after the philosophical discovery of the essence of human beings, which is mind, the philosophers embarked on another journey of discovering more subtle elements, which is/are believed to be occupying the core of mind and which is/are responsible for the phenomenon that mind essentially is. And though in ordinary parlance 'mind' and 'consciousness' are treated as synonymous and the phenomena of mind and consciousness are seen as ontologically inseparable, in philosophy, a theoretical distinction has been made between the two and from an essentialist perspective, consciousness is accepted as more subtle phenomenon and is given the fundamental position in the construal of mind.

And now, philosophers (of course not all) are on their errand of finding more subtle element/s than consciousness, which is/are expected to be at the core of consciousness, responsible for the way consciousness is and is practically inseparable from consciousness and many have identified

qualia or the subjective feeling of our conscious experiences as the element subtler (in a theoretical sense) than the phenomena of consciousness and the essence of it (consciousness).

A careful study of the development of various theories of consciousness through time would help us to get closer to an understanding of what exactly the problem of consciousness is. In this project of mine, I have identified the experiential aspect of consciousness to be its (consciousness) essential feature, on the basis of the fact that, for understanding the real meaning of what 'consciousness' is, having an experiential perspective is necessary. In my project, I am going to show how this experientiality of consciousness constitutes its heart and soul, that without the experientiality, there seems to be a lot of difficulty in conceiving consciousness.

There are many other theories regarding consciousness, which are completely different from and which go against the experiential essentialist theories of consciousness, to which the notion of qualia is central. Those theories are generally called the physicalist/materialist/reductionist theories of mind or consciousness, the sole aim of which is to reduce the phenomenon of mind or consciousness to physical phenomena and to prove that mind or consciousness does not have any independent ontological existence over and above the physical world and its physical description.

I prefer to call such theories, the anti-experiential theories of consciousness with respect to their typical stance of denying the experiential aspect of consciousness, which in my opinion is the only characteristic that captures the essence of consciousness. Consequently, I am more concerned with arguing against the *anti-experiential accounts* of consciousness, in particular, the *physicalist/materialist* accounts, as those are the main rivals to my position.

Based on the availability of the anti-experiential accounts of consciousness in the literature in this domain, we can say that the anti-experiential and the physicalist/materialist accounts are mostly the same. Anti-experientialism is actually one of the typical features of the physicalist/materialist theories of consciousness. Such theories typically deny the importance of subjective experience in the determination of a good account of consciousness and they usually try to provide strategies to reduce conscious experience into physical/material phenomena.

At the same time, however, though I support a metaphysically essentialist and experiential view of consciousness, I cannot see or conceive of consciousness as being completely detached from body or having a physical basis. And even though I do not know exactly what role the body plays in the constitution of consciousness, I strongly believe that it contributes significantly to the experientiality aspect of consciousness. Hence in this sense, my position cannot be considered to be in complete

disagreement with a materialist account except in so far as such an account denies experientiality or reduces it to non-experiential elements of the physical order.

Conceiving consciousness as completely detached from the body, in my opinion, would only make the problem more perplexing and baffling by widening the gap between mind/consciousness and body/world, and in a world, where these seemingly diametrically opposed entities seem to work in harmony and interact with each other almost all the time, we would find it extremely difficult to account for such close connections. Scientific studies have discovered uncanny co-relations between our various conscious experiential states and the physical states of brain (a physical entity which is publicly observable and thus the object of scientific studies) and these scientific findings cannot be just shrugged off until we come to know something very firmly about the nature of consciousness or until the rudiments of consciousness or consciousness studies are known. But, even after the discovery of such co-relations between the conscious experiential states and brain states, arguments as to why consciousness cannot be reduced to physical phenomena in their purely physicalist descriptions must be stated by anyone who holds a position like mine. In this dissertation, I will adduce some of them in favour of my claim.

The problem of consciousness can be looked at from various perspectives and depending upon the various ways of looking at it, the nature

of the problem of consciousness also changes. However, the one problem regarding it, that I am concerned with here, is *the problem of subjectivity or the first-person perspective of our conscious experiences*. For me, this first-person perspective of our conscious experience, is at the heart of our consciousness and without being able to explain it adequately, no explanation of consciousness can be expected to be complete or satisfactorily explanatory of the phenomenon of consciousness. So, I explored a vast range of literature on consciousness by various philosophers and scientists in order to have a better grip on the description of the problem and to see if my concerns were addressed by the different ways of stating the problematic.

The research design under which my dissertation falls is qualitative design. When applied to philosophical research, the term ‘qualitative’ refers to an investigation of the meanings of the concepts involved in the discourse on a particular issue or subject-matter. In other words, my specific research method in this dissertation is the method of conceptual analysis. Now, conceptual analysis in my dissertation has been made at two levels – (i) analysis of the concept of consciousness itself and (ii) analysis of the problem of consciousness. Hence, I believe that my dissertation is a good sample of how conceptual analysis as a research method is applied under qualitative design in philosophical research.

Let me give a brief overview of the chapter divisions. My dissertation is divided into three substantive chapters besides this introduction. They are as follows.

Chapter 2: Consciousness: The Phenomenon and The Problem

Chapter 3: The Meta-Problem Challenge

Chapter 4: The Question of Solvability of HPC: Does the Solvability of M-PC Imply the Solvability of HPC?

Chapter 2 starts with a methodological concern about consciousness. In this chapter I have asked and explored what is the appropriate question with which one can begin a *metaphysical* project of consciousness. At the very outset of this chapter I have stated that my project on consciousness is a metaphysical one, since my sole aim is to know the real nature of consciousness, or the kind of problem that I am concerned about, is the problem related to the nature of consciousness as a phenomenon.

For doing this, a catalogue of the questions about consciousness that embody some metaphysical concern or the other, has been made in this chapter, which I thought would be of great help to understand the significance of one particular question among many. After the identification of that one question, in this chapter I have mentioned how I intend this question to be answered, which in turn will help in revealing the primary nature of consciousness.

The main concern of Chapter 3 is to discuss extensively on that one problem I have singled out, which is, Chalmers' meta-problem of consciousness. Now this problem is dependent on the well-known hard problem of consciousness discussed in the second chapter. In this chapter, following Chalmers, I have tried to see what exactly the meta-problem of consciousness entails and how it is related to the hard problem of consciousness.

What sort of consciousness is relevant for the meta-problem or is relevant in the context of the discussion of the meta-problem of consciousness, what sort of explanation is expected to solve the meta-problem and how far it seems to be possible to come up with a solution to the meta-problem are the things that have been discussed in detail in this chapter. At the end of this chapter, I have tried to see how the meta-problem of consciousness gives equal opportunity to everyone interested, to solve the riddle of consciousness and what implications it might have on the overall advancement of the domain of consciousness studies.

The fourth chapter is the concluding chapter of this dissertation and it begins with the discussion of whether the solvability of the hard problem of consciousness can be deduced from the fact that the meta-problem of consciousness is solvable in principle. In this chapter I have also discussed the drawbacks of neuroscientific accounts of consciousness in particular and scientific accounts of consciousness in general. My criticisms of these

accounts are primarily in terms of the attitude and methodologies they deploy in their attempt to study the phenomenon of consciousness, and revolve around what I consider to be the benefits of having a phenomenological attitude towards the same.

The issues that have been raised and discussed in the section on the drawbacks of neuroscience are, whether we are to consider the findings of neuronal correlates by the neuroscientists as the ultimate discovery about consciousness or whether there remains much more to be discovered and described. In this connection, I have also discussed whether emphasising the experientiality feature of consciousness necessarily implies the rejection of physicalism in toto.

Chapter Two

Consciousness: The Phenomenon and The Problem

Before I delve into any serious discussion on the problem of consciousness, I think, for the sake of convenience, I should ask myself: What is/are the (kind/s of) question/s that I want to ask or am interested to ask in this dissertation? Doing this would also help me to be sure about the nature of my enquiry. Now, since I am interested in knowing the *nature* of consciousness, I guess, the nature of my enquiry (even before specifying any particular question) is *metaphysical* in particular. This discards the questions (and the discussions on) about consciousness with epistemological and semantic themes, commitments or influences.

Needless to say, even if we keep the epistemological, semantic and all other kinds of questions (e.g. methodological) about consciousness out of the sphere of the present discussion and concentrate wholly and only on the metaphysical questions, due to a of plethora of questions having metaphysical undertones, we need to be very cautious in specifying that *one* question, which would form the core of our philosophical enquiry.

The questions which are tagged as being metaphysical are those which are asked in order to know the real nature of the phenomena at hand. Hence, metaphysical questions about consciousness tend to ask about the

nature of consciousness. Now, even though all metaphysical questions about consciousness have the same concern – nature of consciousness - they can be so diverse with regard to their particular tone of enquiry that each of them can give a whole new dimension to the discussion or study of consciousness. That is why the need for specificity is so high. So, not only do I need to specify that my questions about consciousness are of a metaphysical nature, I need to specify further what particular question I have in mind.

The Catalogue of Questions

In order to pinpoint the specific question I am going to address in my dissertation, I would like to collate all metaphysical questions that can be or have been raised with regard to consciousness. But even before I collate these questions, there are certain things I must look out for: (i) the *presuppositions* about consciousness, having which at the back of the mind, knowingly or unknowingly, the questions are asked, (ii) the *sort of problem* that a question about consciousness purports it to be, (iii) whether there is *one* question, which is more *fundamental* than others in the sense that it is not asked under the influence of any pre-theoretical beliefs about consciousness, such that it could lead to a genuine enquiry about the nature thereof.

The why question(s)

To begin with, there is the ‘why’ question(s). Among the (kinds of) questions about consciousness that have a metaphysical intent, the ‘why’ questions are those that have been typically associated with philosophers’ enquiry about consciousness. One could even say very generally that such questions are the hallmark of philosophical enquiry per se. However, in the context of consciousness studies, the ‘why’ questions that are usually asked are, ‘Why is consciousness what it is?’; ‘Why is consciousness so hard to explain?’; ‘Why are we endowed with consciousness?’ etc.

On the face of it, such questions seem to be way too hard to provide any definite answer. But this does not make such questions any less worthy of asking. These are the very deep philosophical questions and at some point of time, sooner or later, a real seeker of truth will have to realise the importance of these questions in revealing the nature of reality and the phenomenon under consideration, which is consciousness in the present context. These are like the ultimate questions one could ask about consciousness, and once we find answers to these questions, there will remain no further things to know about the same, logically speaking. From a hardcore philosophical standpoint, the intention of a philosopher is always to demystify various the phenomena that together make up or compose reality. Of course, they (philosophers) differ from the sciences in terms of

the methodology they follow or the kind of theory of justification they adhere to, but at the end of the day, if we look at the telos, philosophers and scientists cannot be so different from each other.

But in spite of its (their) philosophical relevance, the ‘why’ question(s) is (are) not the right sort of question(s) to start my undertaking with. The reason is that the ‘why’ question(s) fail(s) to provide us with any substantive and positive characteristic of consciousness or any clue to proceed further with this investigation of the nature of consciousness.

This is because the ‘why’ question(s) about consciousness always seem(s) to look upon the phenomenon of consciousness as something elusive, enigmatic, indescribable, always falling short of explanations. Now, to know something, if we begin by accepting that it cannot be known, then that project ends at that very moment, before it can even take off. To say this, is not in any way to say that, the philosophers who raise these why questions have no good reason to do describe consciousness in this manner. All that I am trying to point out is that it does not provide us with a toehold on our research arena from which further steps to comprehend consciousness can be taken.

The how question(s)

The second one to look at is (are) the ‘how’ question(s). These are the questions, which are widely accepted to be of the highest intellectual standard, especially when one unquestioningly accepts the authority of science and wears blinders that prevent him or her to look at those things that science doesn’t describe or explain, even if those things are experientially conspicuous. These are the questions about consciousness that have typically been asked by scientists, particularly those working in the field of brain science.

Examples of these questions are as follows: “How does a conscious entity use consciousness to discriminate, categorize and react to the stimuli that it receives from various sources?”, “How does it integrate the information?”, “How does it produce reports about mental states?”, “How does it access its own internal states?”, “How does it focus its attention on its objects?” etc.¹ This ‘it’, which has been used in all the questions mentioned above, on the face of it, seems to be referring to consciousness, or logically speaking, is supposed to refer to consciousness. But, *as a matter of fact*, somehow or the other, in *most* cases, this ‘it’ has been understood as

¹ David J Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness,” in *Philosophy of Mind: A Guide and Anthology*, ed. John Heil (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2004), 618.

the brain or central nervous system. So, the sole aim of these questions (and whoever asks them) is to know how brain works or performs the myriad functions, such as the ones mentioned in the questions above.

Now, if that is the case, then there is a very serious problem. The problem is that the questions which were originally asked in order to know about the nature of consciousness already presuppose something important about its nature – that it is a function of the brain and central nervous system! If the background assumption is that consciousness is or is ontologically equivalent to the activities of the brain, then the metaphysical inquirer has no more questions to ask! But isn't that why we are asking the questions in the first place? Because we do not know what consciousness is? Now, one argument given by those who accept this relation of ontological equivalence between consciousness and brain states is that they are strongly correlated. But, correlations don't necessarily imply ontological equivalence so we can take it that the original question about consciousness remains unanswered even if we assume that the brain has anything to do with conscious experiences.

The 'how' questions mostly consider the phenomenon of consciousness to be a potpourri of activities or functions in the brain. And consequently, the problem of consciousness then becomes nothing more than the problem of identifying the various brain functions, which are expected to underlie the various conscious states that people experience.

Despite these drawbacks, the ‘how’ questions enjoy popularity and an elevated status in the field of consciousness studies. Let us see why.

The ‘how’ questions are such that in theory there is no problem in these questions being answered. Due to the relentless hard work of brain scientists, brain science as a discipline has reached a certain level of development from where it can tell us a great deal about a lot of our day to day activities. The development of brain science, therefore, makes it seem to us that answering the ‘how’ questions are really possible, and also that, a vast number of those questions have already been answered. But to deduce from this that we now know or will soon know all there is to know about consciousness is a big jump that cannot be justified. One set of questions that still remain are the how questions. Let us see what they are.

The ‘what’ question

The third and the last one in this catalogue of (types of) questions, is the ‘what’ question. Unlike the other types of questions mentioned earlier in the catalogue, where many different questions could be found to be taking shelter under the umbrella of each of the types; there is *only one single question*, which belongs to this ‘what’ type, in my opinion. That question is, ‘What is consciousness?’

This question about consciousness seems to be the most fundamental question as it asks about the nature of consciousness and consciousness only, and more importantly without having any prejudice or pre-theoretical belief about what it is or what it could possibly be. The sole purpose of this question is to know what the phenomenon of consciousness is. This is what one could call, a 'genuine' question. It is a question about consciousness per se. For that matter, this question seems to be having no prior commitment whatsoever to any particular way of thinking of consciousness. Its goal is *understanding*, not merely theorizing on the basis of some pre-theoretic prejudices.

Compared to the other types of questions mentioned in this catalogue, this 'what' question is the appropriate one to start the enquiry about the nature of consciousness with, and the reason is quite obvious. It is because, where all the other types in the catalogue already envisages the phenomenon of consciousness as being something or other, way before reaching any conclusion that is not the case with the 'what' question.

So, it has, by now, become clear, that why the 'what' question is the best candidate to be regarded as the most fundamental question about consciousness, answering which could lead us to the understanding of the nature of it. Its (the 'what' question) fundamentality stems from its nature of being free from all the possible pre-theoretical beliefs about consciousness, which can affect the philosophical enquiry about consciousness so heavily.

The fundamental nature of the ‘what’ question is due to its nature of having no perspective about consciousness as a phenomenon apart from it (consciousness) being a phenomenon only.

Now, one might say that, logically it is not possible for us to ask questions about things, about which we have no knowledge. So, in this sense, having some sort of idea (pre-theoretical), clear or opaque, is necessary in order to ask questions about them. The pre-theoretical idea/knowledge/perspective, about the objects (being enquired about) might be completely wrong, but during the initial phase of any research they are of extreme value, since without them no research could be started. So, following this logic, the problem with the ‘what’ question would be that, if it does not have any perspective about consciousness, or that, if it starts with no bare idea about consciousness whatsoever, then it is not even possible for it to enquire about consciousness.

Well, against such an attack against the ‘what’ question, it can be said that, the ‘what’ question does have some perspective about consciousness too, but the amount of perspective/knowledge/idea (pre-theoretical), that it has, is though sufficient enough to let it (‘what’ question) enquire about consciousness, but, at the same time, not enough to be able to convince the questioner about what the nature of consciousness may be. And that perspective/knowledge/idea, that the ‘what’ question has about consciousness, is simply that, it (consciousness) is just a phenomenon, which

demands explanation and can be explained. Having this perspective about consciousness is sufficient enough to start enquiring about it. Although this is a kind of perspective, which barely decks the object (of enquiry) with any specific characteristic even before the process of enquiry has started.

Proceeding further with the analysis of the what question

So, after discussing the different types of questions and comparing them with each other, we find that the most fundamental² and the least perspectival³ among them is the ‘what’ question. So this is the question that I want to begin my enquiry into the nature of consciousness with.

Now, the important question is, what exactly is asked for when the ‘what’ question is asked in the context of knowing the nature of consciousness? Is it a definite *definition* of consciousness that we are seeking in asking this question? Unfortunately, chances of there being a definite definition of consciousness are very little. In *The International Dictionary of Psychology* (1989), edited by British psychologist Sutherland, it has been

² In the sense of asking about the very being of the object at hand, and about that only.

³ In the sense of having least amount of *pre-theoretical* perspective/knowledge/beliefs about consciousness to start the philosophical enquiry about its (consciousness) nature with.

written that consciousness as a phenomenon is very difficult to define and that it is intelligible only if there is a sort of *immediate engagement* with it.⁴

Fortunately, my aim here is not to look for any perfect definition of ‘consciousness’ even though conceptual analysis is my purported methodology. In raising the ‘what’ question, my aim is to identify those features of consciousness, which are conspicuously available to us and to find the most fundamental⁵ among them.

The first step of the project: asking the ‘what’ question

Now that I know where to start, let me directly get into the groove and ask, ‘What are the features of consciousness that strike us as most obvious?’ *Intentionality* and *phenomenality* are usually accepted as the two basic features, sides or aspects of consciousness.⁶ So, without further ado, I will get into a discussion of these features and try to see how they help consciousness in being what it is. In this connection, I will also try to see whether there is any hierarchy between these two features of consciousness

⁴ David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a fundamental theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

⁵ In the sense of being essential, without which the phenomenon of conscious cannot exist or be conceived.

⁶ Dan Zahavi, “Intentionality and Phenomenality: A Phenomenological Take on the Hard Problem,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 29, (2003): 66.

in the sense that one is more fundamental or essential to consciousness than the other.

The intentionality feature

By intentionality of consciousness is meant that it is about or directed towards something. Consciousness, or more specifically, conscious states are always directed towards or are about something or the other. This *directedness* or *aboutness* of consciousness or conscious states is its intentionality feature.⁷ For example, believing, doubting etc. are different conscious states (or conscious acts), and when one is in such states (or perform such acts), then there must be some objects of the belief or doubt, that the belief or doubt is about or directed towards. If one believes that sun rises in the east, then in that context, that person's belief is about 'sun rising in the east'.

In a mechanical way, this intentionality feature of consciousness, could be understood as the ability of consciousness to focus its attention on the objects or to shift it from one to another. Thinking in this way about the intentionality feature of consciousness can lead us to ask about the functions that might involve in or lie beneath such activities [like, (i) focusing its

⁷ Tim Crane, *The Mechanical Mind: A Philosophical Introduction to Minds, Machines and Mental Representations*. 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 31.

attention on objects, and (ii) riveting it from one to another; consider few more acts like (iii) differentiating between different objects, (iv) storing the information about the objects, (v) recognizing the objects based on the stored knowledge about them etc.] performed by consciousness; and likewise, thinking about consciousness in terms of this sense of intentionality can lead us to have a functional exposition of consciousness.

Whether to understand intentionality strictly in this *complex sense* of being functions responsible for consciousness performing some acts, or in the *simple sense* of being directed towards or about certain objects, that is a different question altogether and here I am not getting into that.

The phenomenality feature

The phenomenality feature is nothing but the felt aspect of consciousness. In being consciousness, there is *something it is like to be conscious*. Something, like a feeling is there. Something, that can be felt so intensely and immediately, but can never be expressed properly in words. No matter how lucid the descriptions of those feelings are that we provide, none of them can actually get hold of the essence of them (conscious experiences). The reason why the descriptions always fall short of this phenomenality feature of consciousness would be discussed soon. But, for the time being let

us solely concentrate on the phenomenality feature itself and try to understand what it is.

This phenomenality feature of consciousness is typically characterized by or is understood in terms of ‘what it is like’⁸ states. For example, writing dissertation, writing dissertation while fretting over the deadline, writing leisurely for the sake of cultivating beautiful poetries, taking sips of black coffee, seeing the person approaching you whom you are secretly in love with for years, taking the smell of mothball, accidentally touching a scorching pan, are all different states of conscious experience and when we are in those conscious states of experience, there is something it is like to be in those states and that can only be felt. These feelings are hardcore subjective phenomena and are extremely elusive.

These feelings associated with conscious experiences are called ‘qualia’. These are the subjective qualities or qualitative feelings of consciousness or conscious experience. And experiencing these qualia is the phenomenality of consciousness. Though these feelings have typically been associated with sensations, but they are also be found in case of thoughts and awareness as well, because in case of thoughts and awareness too, there is something it is like to think or have thoughts and be aware respectively.

⁸ Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” *The Philosophical Review*, 83, no. 4 (1974): 436.

I have already mentioned that defining consciousness is not an easy task and one has to be satisfied with giving clarifications of what it is.⁹ Now, in the Sutherland edited *The International Dictionary of Psychology* (1989), one such clarification of consciousness can be found, which says referring to consciousness, ‘The having of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; awareness.’¹⁰ So, here in this mentioned clarification of consciousness, it (consciousness) is understood as the ‘having’ of perceptions, thoughts etc. In my opinion, this clarification of consciousness in terms of or as being the ‘having’ of perceptions, thoughts, awareness etc. alludes to the phenomenal feature/aspect of consciousness. Let us try to see how. This ‘having’ could be understood in two ways, though they are not diametrically opposed to each other. In one way, this ‘having’ could be understood as the *possession* of perceptions, thoughts etc. (by a subject) or *being in* perceptual, cognitive states. On the other hand, in another way, it could be understood as there being some *qualities* that are possessed (having) by such states of consciousness. These qualities are the subjective feelings and that is what I said earlier, the phenomenality of consciousness is. And consequently, the possession of such states or being in such states, almost invariably and inevitably leads one to experience the phenomenality of consciousness.

⁹ Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, p. 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Now, let me get back to the discussion of why descriptions fail to grasp the essence of these feelings or why they fail to do justice to these feelings while describing them. This is because feelings are *experiential* in nature. That is to say, they are phenomena, which, if not experienced, have no existence whatsoever. For their very existence, they are dependent on being experienced. Their essence is their experientiality. So, in order to understand them fully or grasp their essence, one has to experience them. And the descriptions, no matter how lucidly they are given, can never provide subjects, the experience of having or being in those states.

The question of fundamentality

Now that we have got some basic idea about both the intentionality and the phenomenality features of consciousness, let us concentrate on the question of fundamentality of one or the other of these features. To correctly phrase this question, one could ask, ‘Which among the two features of intentionality and phenomenality is fundamental for the *being* of consciousness or for consciousness being what it is?’

I came to the initial realization that between the two features, the phenomenality feature is more intimately associated with the phenomenon of consciousness and it seems impossible to conceive of consciousness without it. In every conscious state, subjective qualitative

feelings/qualia/phenomenality are so inherently embedded that, while being in those states, no one can avoid experiencing them (the qualia). Conscious states are inherently phenomenal in nature. In every conscious state, there is something it is like to be in that state. Moreover, it also seems that, it is because of those qualia, that the conscious states seem to be full of meaning and what they are. Phenomenality then seems to be consciousness or conscious experience *itself* and vice versa.

But what about the intentionality feature? Does the fact that, phenomenality seems to be essential to consciousness, in any way imply that, intentionality cannot be so? Most of the analyses of these two features of consciousness done by the philosophers, tend to project them as being contradictory and opposed to each other, and much of such analyses have contributed to or led to debates regarding the fundamentality of one among them for the proper understanding of consciousness. If intentionality is understood in the simple sense of *directedness* or *aboutness*, then I don't think there is any problem in reconciling it with the phenomenality feature of consciousness. The simple sense of intentionality just says that, consciousness or conscious states exhibit their nature as being about or directed towards some objects. But, if course if intentionality is understood in the *complex sense* as the *underlying functions* (as discussed earlier in the section devoted to the discussion of the intentionality feature) and which can eventually lead to a fully functional exposition of consciousness, then

intentionality cannot be reconciled with the phenomenality aspect. It is because, the functional exposition of consciousness cannot be anything else but an *objective description* of the functions, which are expected to be the basis of consciousness, but, on the other hand, the phenomenality of consciousness, as said earlier is of *experiential* nature and thus is *subjective*, and because of this objective-subjective dichotomy, it seems next to impossible that they (intentionality feature in its complex sense, and the phenomenality feature) can be reconciled with each other.

The phenomena, which are of experiential nature are subjective. In any experience, the presence of the *subject* or *experiencer* is necessary. Without the subject, no experience is possible. And when there is a subject, then there must be a perspective. This feature can be called '*subjectivity*'. Now, if the subject is a quintessential part of consciousness or conscious experience, then the subject's perspective or subjectivity too is.

In my dissertation, I am not taking intentionality in the complex sense and so for me there is no opposition between the intentionality and the phenomenality features/aspects of consciousness. Moreover, both of them seem to be equally important aspects or features of consciousness, in the sense that consciousness must get directed towards some objects (even if the objects are not determinate) and at the same time, consciousness must be charged with phenomenal qualities or qualia.

So, can there be anything, which is more fundamental than both these features of which these two features are just two different but complementary aspects? It seems from the discussion above that there *is* one thing that is more fundamental than both the features and that is the *experientiality feature* of consciousness.

The experientiality feature

The experientiality feature of consciousness refers to its nature as being an experiential phenomenon. As discussed earlier, experiential phenomena are those phenomena, which, for their existence, are dependent on *being experienced* by some subject or experiencer. And this feature or aspect of consciousness seems to be *the most important of all*, a feature that perfectly captures its *essence*. To be able to grasp this feature/aspect of consciousness, one must have some immediate association (through experience) with it. Without experiencing consciousness, it seems quite hard to understand what consciousness actually is.

Intentionality and phenomenality are just two aspects/sides of this fundamental aspect of consciousness. Because of the intentionality feature, it is possible for consciousness to get directed towards objects of (their) experience, and because of the phenomenality feature, consciousness feels

to be something. But this distinction between intentionality and phenomenality, in my opinion, is useful only for conceptual analysis. On the other hand, as far as the practicality of existence is concerned, no such distinction can be found. That is to say, if (conscious) experiences are always the experience of something, then consciousness/experience has to be directed towards those 'somethings', and thus, this directedness of consciousness being essential for the experiences to be possible, should not be distinguished from the experience, in the sense of phenomenality. Intentionality, although is so much important for experience as we saw in the discussion above, does not seem to be so intimately associated with the phenomenon of experience. On the other hand, phenomenality, in virtue of being an experiential phenomenon, seems to be more intimately associated with the phenomenon of consciousness than the intentionality aspect or feature, and so intimately, that it seems to be the essence of consciousness, whereas intentionality does not. Of course, in this one specific sense (as being experience/experiential), this (phenomenality) is essential to/of consciousness. But, all that I am purported to say here is that, it is not in between the intentionality and the phenomenality features of consciousness, that we should choose, which one is more fundamental, because they are both the complementary and not contradictory aspects of a subtler phenomenon, and which seems to be more fundamental for consciousness. And that is the experientiality aspect.

So, experientiality is the one feature, which is to be accepted as being the essential feature of consciousness, without which, consciousness won't be whatever it is.

From the essential feature to the nature of consciousness

So, after all these discussions, we seem to have found what is essential to consciousness. As per my plan of work, now I am supposed to see, that whether from that essential feature of consciousness, anything can be known about its (consciousness) nature or not.

The identified essential feature of consciousness is the experientiality feature. Experientiality, as discussed several times in the earlier passages, is the *quality of being experienced*. Now, it is logical that, if something, say A, is the essential feature of something, say B, then B is essentially nothing else but A, and thus, A, in virtue of being essentially B, must have the same nature as (that of) B. Similarly, in the context of the nature of consciousness, with reference to the essential feature of consciousness, which is experientiality, consciousness is of the nature of experience. So, in terms of its nature, more than being anything else, consciousness is experience, as it

(experience/experientiality) is central/essential to its (consciousness) existence.¹¹

Actually, for me, consciousness, phenomenality, experientiality, seem to be just one and the same thing, in the sense of being inseparably entangled in the existence. Such is the nature of this entanglement, that to understand one, understanding the others is necessary. To say this, is not in any way to mean that, they cannot be distinguished theoretically. But all I wanted to mean is that, they cannot be separated in existence.

From the nature to the problem of consciousness

Finally, I have reached that point of our discussion where I can discuss about the philosophical problem of consciousness, to find a solution for which philosophers have been toiling for so many years. But, much to our disappointment, there is no single opinion among the adepts regarding what the problem of consciousness is. And consequently, from the niceties of opinions, many different problems of consciousness have sprung. The variety of problems available in the intellectual fraternity is so many in numbers, that it can so easily perplex one.

For example, for some, the problem of consciousness is the problem of identifying the underlying functions of brain, as I have discussed in the 'The 'how' question(s)' section, while for some other, it is not so. For the

¹¹ Ibid.

sake of brevity, however, here I am not going to discuss, the various types of problem of consciousness as identified by different adepts, but instead of that, based on the identified nature of consciousness, I would try to see what the problem of consciousness could be.

In the last section, we have seen that, in terms of its nature, consciousness is an experiential phenomenon or simply, experience. Now, it (consciousness) being experience, is subjective and full of phenomenal properties or qualities/qualia (which are essential elements of the being of consciousness, and thus understanding them is required for the complete understanding of consciousness), to grasp what or understand, being in subjective experiential states, from where (only) they could be accessed, is necessary. Now, to be in CES, from where the qualia could be accessed, having a subjective perspective is necessary, and for having a subjective perspective, what is necessary, is being a subject. That is to say, that consciousness, being an experiential phenomenon, can be understood with all its essentialities, from an experiential perspective only, and that, it cannot be grasped fully, with all its essentialities, from any objective standpoint. And this is, in my opinion, the philosophical problem of consciousness. So, in short, the philosophical problem of consciousness is (actually) the *problem of (conscious) experience*.¹² It is the problem of how consciousness as an

¹² David J. Chalmers, "Consciousness and its Place in Nature," in *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Stephen P. Stich and Ted A. Warfield (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 103.

experiential phenomenon can be studied and theorized from an objective point of view. More specifically, the philosophical problem of consciousness is just the problem of explaining the subjective phenomenal properties/qualia, which are responsible for the way consciousness is.¹³ Such a problem can also be understood as the problem of knowing what sort of role the experientiality of consciousness play in constituting the phenomenon of consciousness, and how it (experientiality) plays that role.

The question, which is usually asked with reference to the phenomenal properties of consciousness, in the context of formulating the problem of consciousness, is ‘why there are phenomenality of consciousness’ or that, ‘why there is something it is like to be in conscious states’. But this sort of questions becomes more meaningful, when they are asked to counter the theories of consciousness, which cull out the phenomenality of consciousness. The reason why they become more important in such contexts is that, there, the theories project the phenomenality as being not associated with, or more strikingly, being not at all existent, even though they are so clearly experienced by many of us, if not all, and that too as being intimately and inseparably related with consciousness, and if the theories are true in saying what they say about consciousness, then the theorists of such theories will have to explain, why phenomenality without being associated with consciousness or being

¹³ Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, 3.

existent, appears to many of us as being existent and associated with consciousness so conspicuously.

So, the important takeaway point from the discussion done in the present section and the last is that, the experientiality being the essential feature of consciousness cannot be culled out in any theory of consciousness. Any theory of consciousness, that seeks to explain consciousness, must explain the experientiality too. Explaining consciousness cannot be done, without explaining the experientiality.

But, even having received this aforesaid caveat, still various different trends in the intellectual history, from time to time, have tried and rejected this experientiality of consciousness, the element of consciousness for which consciousness is what it is; and problematic at the same time. There is a long history of such attempts of rescinding the existence of experientiality/phenomenality/qualia. We can call such theories of consciousness the ‘anti-experiential theories’ of consciousness. At the same time, many philosophers have also come up with a lot of thought experiments and arguments which prove the existence of the experientiality/phenomenality/qualia, and also that theories that do not explain this aspect or feature of consciousness, they staggeringly fail at the task they think they are up to.

The problem of consciousness, which many philosophers have identified to be the core and the only original, muddling problem of

consciousness, the 'hard' one in Chalmers' jargon and I agree with them in this regard, that, such a problem enjoys the status of being a conundrum, because of the phenomena of qualia or subjective feelings associated with consciousness or conscious experiences. Now, since this phenomena of qualia is the element of the problem of consciousness, which makes the problem really an intractable one, and which seems far away from the reach of science, thus, many attempts have been made to deny the existence of qualia, both by the scientists and the philosophers who are greatly fascinated by the idea of doing philosophy in the dazzling light of science and are extremely enthralled by the scientific views of consciousness, such as Dennett¹⁴, and the Churchlands.

Philosopher Patricia Churchland, for example, calls the hard problem of consciousness, which is centered around or is based on the concept of qualia, the 'hornswoggle problem'¹⁵. She argues that, no problem can be or should be considered to be hard or soft in advance.

So, the philosophers, who argue that there is hard problem of consciousness, which cannot be solved by solving the soft or easy problems of consciousness or that even after all the soft problems of consciousness are solved, the hard problem of consciousness will still be there unsolved, they will have to prove the existence of qualia and its irreducibility to physical

¹⁴ John R. Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (New York, USA and Canada: The New York Review Books, 1990), 39.

¹⁵ Blackmore, *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction*, 6.

phenomena, the concept of which is central to the hard problem of consciousness and by attacking which or denying the existence of which, attempts have been made both in science and in some schools of philosophy to get away with the real problem of consciousness. Now, to do this, many philosophers came up with some of the most interesting and mind-boggling thought experiments and arguments in the history of philosophy that support the claims regarding the existence and irreducibility of qualia, made by many philosophers.

The arguments and the thought experiments to prove the existence of experientiality aspect or feature/phenomenality/qualia

Let us now try to see the various arguments and thought experiments that prove the existence of experientiality aspect or feature/phenomenality/qualia.

The zombie/conceivability argument

The first argument, that I am going to discuss here has been used to attack the theory of pure physicalism (which talks about reducing the

phenomenon of consciousness into mere physical phenomena, or is of the opinion that, consciousness can be understood fully in physical terms, without taking the experientiality aspect into consideration or explaining it), which is one of the varieties of anti-experiential theories. This is called the ‘zombie/conceivability argument’. David Chalmers is the philosopher who came up with this thought experiment of zombies¹⁶, organisms that are, as far as their physical structure and whatever physical processes are going on within them are concerned, completely like the organisms, which are conscious. Although, unlike the conscious organisms, the zombies lack consciousness. Zombies do not have any inner-life¹⁷ like (us) the conscious beings, although behaviourally and/or physically or in all the ways physical, they are completely like the conscious beings and it is quite hard to say by looking at the physical properties they have, that they are not conscious. This zombie argument is also called the ‘conceivability argument’¹⁸, since this argument is based on and also promotes that, zombies are conceivable, or that, it is possible for us conceive of zombies and there involves no contradiction.

Now, the question is, how with this argument, Chalmers argued in favour of qualia or provided the materialists or the physicalists a critique of their accounts of consciousness? Let us try to see that. Based on the

¹⁶ Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, 84-88.

¹⁷ Characterized by the experientiality/phenomenality/qualia.

¹⁸ Chalmers, “Consciousness and its Place in Nature,” 105.

conceivability of the zombies, Chalmers first of all proved that, there is no necessary connection between the physical structure and the processes on one hand; and consciousness on the other. If it were the case¹⁹, then it would not have been possible for us or anyone to be able to think of or conceive of organisms, which are physically like conscious beings but lack consciousness. In such a case, as the physicalists claim that, consciousness is nothing but the physical processes or that, physical processes give rise to conscious experiences or consciousness, first of all, consciousness being identical with physical processes could not have been conceived to be absent in the organisms, which have got the similar sort of or the same physical processes as the conscious beings; and second of all, physical processes in virtue of being solely responsible for necessarily giving rise to consciousness when all the related things are congenial for the emergence of consciousness (out of the physical processes), no matter what happens, they will always and with no exception give rise to consciousness. Now, both these abovementioned claims come out to be false as we are able to conceive of zombies and this proves the daftness of such claims about consciousness made by the physicalists. This argument proves that, consciousness is something extra than the physical processes, and is more likely to be identified with the experientiality/phenomenality/qualia. This experientiality or phenomenality or qualia which can be seen to be present in the conscious

¹⁹ That there is a necessary connection between the physical structure and the processes; and consciousness.

beings, but absent in the zombies, and which seems to be responsible for the conscious beings, being conscious.

In another way, it can be said that, consciousness is different from the physical structure or the processes, because of its unique quality called 'qualia', the felt aspect of consciousness; and thus, consciousness cannot be reduced to physical processes. Something, suppose A, can be reduced to something, suppose B, iff A is nothing but B.²⁰ And, if A is B or the vice versa, then, neither of them can be conceived without the other. So, the fact that, consciousness can be conceived to be absent, although the so called physical basis of consciousness is very much present in some organisms, it proves that, consciousness is different from the physical elements or the processes. And the fact that, consciousness is different from the physical elements or processes, proves that, it cannot be reduced to the physical elements or processes; or to be more logical, none of them can be reduced to the other.

Now, Dennett shrugs off this argument by saying that this sort of argument involves 'falling for the zombic hunch'²¹, which is a sort of mistake. According to Dennett, this is just a natural tendency to be able to

²⁰ John R. Searle, "The Irreducibility of Consciousness," in *Philosophy of Mind: a guide and anthology*, ed. John Heil (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2004) 701.

²¹ Susan Blackmore, *Conversations on consciousness* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

imagine zombies. But, the fact that something is imaginable, does not entail its possibility.

On the other hand, Ned Block, who is also against physicalism, although in its form called ‘functionalism’, is of the opinion that, imagining zombies, which have got the same physical basis for having consciousness or conscious experience, as that of the conscious beings, but who lack consciousness, is not possible.²² For Block, physiology in some way or the other, is responsible for phenomenology (the felt aspect). Thus, having same physical basis for consciousness like the conscious beings would inevitably give rise to consciousness or conscious experience, with no exception anywhere in the universe.

The knowledge argument

Frank Jackson, in his article²³, *What Mary Didn't Know*, came up with his thought experiment to prove the existence of the subjectivity of our

²² Ibid., 30.

²³ Frank Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 83, no. 5 (1986): 291-295.

experiences and to refute the scientific claims about consciousness. For the sake of brevity, I am discussing this thought experiment in a slightly different way than how it has been presented in the original paper. In his thought experiment, Jackson imagined of a female physicist, Mary, who has been kept confined all her life in a black and white room, which contains things, which are coloured either black or white; or a mix of the two. So, Mary has never experienced anything having any other colour apart from black and white. But, despite having no direct acquaintance with the colours other than black and white or the coloured objects, being a physicist, Mary knows everything physical, that are there to be known about colours or colour vision. She perfectly knows, or that, she has all the knowledge about colour and colour vision, that physics has to offer. But, when Mary, for the very first time sees something, which has got the colour red, (or for that matter any colour other than black and white) she gets to know how it feels to see something red (or any other colour she had never experienced before). So, while experiencing some red coloured objects, suppose, red apples, she gets to know something very new about colour red and its vision, which she never knew before, though in virtue of having the complete knowledge of colour or colour vision that physics offers, she knew all the physical facts about colours and their vision that are there to know. From this, it clearly seems that, the physical knowledge of colour or colour vision didn't contain the knowledge of how it feels to see or experience the colours and thus, this cannot be considered to be complete in terms of cooping up within its

account all the facts about colours or colour vision that are there to know. In fact, this objection is not specific to the theory of colour and colour vision as provided by physics but to all the theories or explanations regarding consciousness or various conscious experiences, provided by physics starting from its inception till date. None of the accounts of physics or in general, science, regarding consciousness, is able to make us feel, how exactly it feels to be in an experiential state, without us really being in such states. So, with this thought experiment, what Jackson tried to show is that, though the physical knowledge of consciousness is expected to be or rather propagated by the scientists to be complete, in terms of containing within its account, all the things and the facts, that are there to know about consciousness or conscious experiences; there are still some more facts about consciousness, which are not contained within the physical account of it and are to be known, even when all the facts about consciousness or conscious experiences pointed out by physics, are known. Physical knowledge of consciousness may be considered to be complete in terms of containing all the physical things or facts about consciousness. But, there are some non-physical (non-physical in the sense that, it cannot be completely understood in physical terms) facts about consciousness, which clearly seem to have no place in the physical account of consciousness and thus, if the physical account of consciousness is claimed to be complete in terms of containing each and everything, that are there to be known about consciousness, then that is conspicuously false. So, from this, it logically follows that, no physical

theory of consciousness can adequately or satisfactorily explain consciousness.

The ‘what it is like’ argument

Thomas Nagel, who is specially known for explaining the subjective feeling or subjectivity of our experiences in terms of ‘there is something it is like to be in an experiential state’²⁴, has tried to prove the existence of qualia in his article²⁵ *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* In that article, what Nagel has tried to say is that, there is something it is like to be me, you, him, her, a dog, a cat or generally speaking, a conscious being; or that, there is something it is like to be, being in any conscious experiential state. And this something, the feeling is ineffable, elusive and is not analyzable in terms of any explanatory system of functional states or intentional states.²⁶ About a conscious being, for example, a bat, we can know all the functions, that are

²⁴ Ned Block, “Concepts of Consciousness,” in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2002), 206.

²⁵ Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” 435-450.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 436.

believed to be underlying its conscious experiences or the various ways it behaves or reacts to different stimuli in different situations; we can emulate their physical functions in artificial ways or can simulate their behavior. But, even after being able to do all these, what we can never do, is to feel the same way as they do, when they are in some conscious experiential states or the other. We can never feel, how it feels to be a bat, or for that matter, any other conscious being. This feeling/s, which is/are private to each and every conscious being, seems/seem to be at the core of and inseparable from our consciousness. While conscious, we are immediately aware of these feelings and we never seem to be doubting these feelings, no matter whatever happens. And thus, the idea of denying the existence of these feelings, is clearly a daft one.

The (epistemological) explanatory gap argument

Joseph Levine in his article²⁷ *Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap* tried to argue in favour of qualia, although from an epistemological point of view. In his article, Levine's sole aim was to turn the metaphysical argument of Kripke into an epistemological one.²⁸ As the

²⁷ Joseph Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 64, no. 4 (1983): 354-361.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 354.

science claims that, there is no ontological gap between the physical processes of brain (or without being specific let's say 'anything physical', because the exact phenomena with which the various schools of sciences or scientists identify consciousness, that might vary from school to school or person to person, but one thing which would be common among all their claims is that, that phenomenon is physical in nature) and consciousness or conscious experiences; or that, ontologically these two are identical, thus according to such thesis, the difference between these two is only seeming and not real. So, in order to argue against such an argument, like Chalmers²⁹, Levine has also made a distinction between psycho-physical identities and other theoretical identities.³⁰ In case of the theoretical identity between heat and the motion of molecules, as Levine has used the example of, we might be mistaken foolishly in getting it. I might conceive heat in a very different manner than how it originally is, and there is this strong likelihood of us being mistaken in many ways about it. But, this cannot happen in case of knowing my own consciousness or conscious experiences; or in case of being aware of my own consciousness or conscious experiences. The distinction between the 'phenomenon as itself' and 'the phenomenon as it appears to us' appears to be of no use in the context of knowing one's own consciousness or conscious experiences.³¹ Since, in the context of knowing our own

²⁹ Blackmore, *Conversations*, 39.

³⁰ Levine, "Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap," 355.

³¹ *Ibid.*

consciousness or having conscious experiences, we become immediately aware of our consciousness or conscious states, and thus, *how we feel about them or what we feel them to be, they are just like that and not anything else.* For example, in case of pain, how we feel them or feel them to be; they are just like that. We can never be mistaken about them.

Another important thing about this article of Levine, which marks its novelty is that, in there, Levine says that, even if we accept that, there is no ontological gap between the physical states of brain and the conscious states, then such identity statements should be fully explanatory, leaving nothing unexplained behind. Although, what we get to see is that, no identity statement between the physical states of brain and the conscious states sufficiently explains, leaving no place for objections to creep in, that why such physical processes give rise to certain feelings, or why at the epistemological level or at the level of knowing consciousness or the conscious experiences, there is a gap between the phenomenon of consciousness itself and the phenomenon of consciousness as it appears to us. The answers to such questions have not yet been provided.

There are many more philosophical works which adduce very good infrangible arguments to prove the existence of qualia, which are not mentioned here. But, whatever arguments and thought experiments have been discussed here, from those, I think one can clearly understand what the

phenomenon of consciousness is and what exactly the real philosophical problem of consciousness is.

The last clarification

Some might say that, the philosophers who are arguing in favour of the existence of qualia, are committing the similar sort of mistake in the context of consciousness, which the vitalists had committed by bringing in the concept of vital spirit³² or *élan vital*³³ (a term coined by French philosopher Henri Bergson in his 1907 book *Creative Evolution*) to account for the various functions that the so called dead or inert matters do; or for their vivacious movements. According to this argument, against the ‘qualia-freak’³⁴ philosophers, as with the developments of science, the vitalists’ explanation of the movements of the inert matter with reference to, or in terms of vital spirit appeared to be extremely fatuous or that, not at all an explanation, since the mechanism or the physical functions going on within

³² Blackmore, *Conversations*, 39.

³³ William Bechtel and Robert Richardson, “Vitalism,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1 May, 2018, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/vitalism/v-1>.doi:10.4324/9780415249126-Q109-1

³⁴ Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 32, no. 127 (1982): 127.

the matter could satisfactorily explain such movements; likewise, the problem of qualia in the context of consciousness, as posed by some philosophers would eventually be found to be not at all a problem, once all the facts (physical) are known about consciousness. But, we need to remember, there is a difference between the case of explaining behavior or movements and the case of consciousness. Consciousness, as far as our experiences or our intimate relationship with it is concerned, is or appears as something more than the physical processes of any kind and of which, subjective feelings or qualia are important and inseparable part or aspect. Behaviours are physical in nature, something which are objectively observable, but that is not so the case with consciousness. And thus, though in case of the behavioural sciences, the physical facts could exhaust the knowledge, drawing an analogy of this with consciousness, the same claim cannot be made in the context of consciousness studies. As, Chalmers has rightly said in this connection that, this is actually a disanalogy.³⁵

³⁵ Blackmore, *Conversations*, 39.

Chapter Three

The Meta-Problem Challenge

Chalmers, with the hope of finding a solution to the Hard Problem of Consciousness¹ (HPC) brings the issue of the Meta-problem of Consciousness (M-PC) at the forefront and decides to spend some time discussing it and show how close a connection it has got with the HPC. Chalmers is of the opinion that, a rigorous and erudite discussion on the M-PC, will be able to tell us a great deal about the HPC, and moreover, it might as well help us by providing some important and helpful clues with which we could progress steadily towards having a possible solution to the HPC.

The relevant sort of problem

As Chalmers talks about the M-PC, he basically talks about a problem about the problem of consciousness itself.² But, as it is known to everyone who is quite familiar with the academic works which are centered around the phenomenon of consciousness and through which, in numerous

¹ David J. Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," *The Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 25, no. 9-10 (2018): 6.

² Ibid.

different fields of knowledge, attempts are being made to appropriate the nature of consciousness, that there is not a single problem or rather way of looking at or formulating the problem of consciousness. For example, Michael Tye has classified the problems related to consciousness into eight different types³, which are as follows

- i. Problem of ownership.
- ii. Problem of perspectival consciousness.
- iii. Problem of mechanism.
- iv. Problem of duplicates.
- v. Problem of inverted spectrum.
- vi. Problem of transparency.
- vii. Problem of divided consciousness.
- viii. Problem of unity.

Other ways of classifying the problem(s) can be seen to be done by Churchland⁴. He, in a broader way talked about four kinds of problems related to consciousness, which are, ontological problem, epistemological problem, semantic problem, and the methodological problem of

³ Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 23-33.

⁴ Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 1999), 1-7.

consciousness. We can say that, these four methodic stances look at the same problem, though in three different ways or from different perspectives and which in turn makes the problem itself appear as if there are different problems.

So, though all of the classifications have been made based on the various different ways of looking at consciousness, each of the mentioned above has close ties with the others and thus they are not to be treated as being completely different from each other.

Because of the availability of plethora of formulation of the problem of consciousness, it is of extreme importance to be specific about the particular (formulation of) problem in the context of which or with respect to what Chalmers discusses the M-PC or else there will be high risk of sprawling towards many directions and ending up doing nothing profound.

So, the particular problem that bothers Chalmers and in terms of which Chalmers discusses the M-PC, is the HPC. But to name this, is not enough and thus we need to say what exactly is being meant here by the name. HPC as has been described by Chalmers himself, is *the problem of knowing or explaining why the physical processes of brain always accompanied by experience*⁵. To formulate the problem in a different and more edifying way it can be said that, why it is always that the *physical*

⁵ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 6.

processes of brain give rise to *experience*, which seems to be diametrically opposed to the former, i.e., the brain processes, in terms of its nature. To make better sense of the HPC, we need to discuss it in the context of the distinction between the HPC and the soft problem of consciousness (SPC) as has been done by Chalmers⁶ and then to discuss it in contrast to the SPC.

The hard and the soft problems

The SPC is nothing but the problem of identifying the various processes of the brain that underlie our myriad conscious experiences or which are correlational with our various conscious experiential states. How exactly our cognitive capacities develop and work (or function, to be specific), how we learn various things (function behind the process of learning), what memories are, how they are stored in the brain and in what form, how they are retrieved at the times of need, what is the neurophysiological structure of thought in general, which parts of brain and what sort of activities are responsible for us having various conscious states or behavioural. These are the things that are being dealt with, under the project of solving the soft problem(s) of consciousness. This chore of discovering the functional physical states of brain which go parallel with the

⁶ Chalmers, "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness," 617.

conscious experiential states (CES), is called the *soft* or *easy* problem, as in principle at least, it seems quite feasible to identify such correlations sooner or later, if they exist. Moreover, the developments in the brain science too serves as a proof that, there exist such correlations between brain states and CES and also that, we have been able to learn a really great deal about such correlations.

On the other hand the HPC, as it has already been adumbrated in the paragraph prior to the last one, asks, why such physical processes in the brain almost inevitably and invariably followed by phenomenally vivacious experiences. Why it is always that there are subjective feelings attached with our every single experience, or that, why there are felt aspects of being conscious or being in conscious (experiential) states. Why there is always ‘something it is like to be conscious or being in CES’. Even if we accept the physical processes of the brain to be responsible for yielding the conscious experience, the important question is, why so and how too perhaps. These phenomenally charged feelings, with which we are intimately connected and which seem to be right there at the center of our consciousness are called Qualia⁷ (singular: Quale)⁸.

The hard problem is considered as hard, as none of the physical explanations seems to be any way nearer to explaining the problem, raised

⁷ Blackmore, *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction*, 7.

⁸ Ibid.

in the context of the HPC, away. All of them can clearly be seen to be leaving at least something, if not a lot many, of consciousness, yet to be explained, even if all of the underlying physical functions going on within the gooky stuff inside our skull are known fully. To say this is not in any way to disregard the physical explanations of consciousness. It is true that there is some kind of an important relation, if not specifically of causal kind, between conscious experience and brain states and through learning about the correlations between the two we may shed significant amount of light on the nature of consciousness itself. But what is important to note is that, the physical explanations fail to explain the phenomenon of consciousness satisfactorily and thus we should rivet our attention from the physical explanations of consciousness for at least some time, and look for some other sort of explanations which can succeed in doing what the physical explanations failed to, in the context of the problem of consciousness.

The jottings of the important points of the HPC are as follows

- a. consciousness seems to be something more than how it is being explained physically and seen as.
- b. physical explanations seem to be falling short of consciousness.
- c. consciousness seems to be quite hard to explain (giving the core problem related to it the name of 'HPC')

The relevant sort of consciousness

So, the kind of consciousness that is important here for the discussion in the context of the HPC, is the *phenomenal consciousness*⁹ and the problem which Chalmers considered as hard to explain is the problem of phenomenal consciousness as I tried to give the readers an idea about in some of the lines above. Phenomenal consciousness is understood in terms of ‘*what it is like*’¹⁰ states. In any phenomenally conscious state, there is something it is like to be in that state, filled with qualities that are essentially elusive and subjective in nature, and which are responsible for making the states (phenomenally) conscious. For example, imagine any particular conscious state, be it having your favorite kind of red wine in a party while bantering your chums and rekindling the memories of sophomore days; jaunting around a busy city, each of the corners of which is filled with the crowd of busy pedestrians scuttling on the streets that you are josteling through, cacophony and the smell of urban dust; reading Murakami lying on your cozy bed while snuggling a cushion late in the nights of insomnia; or for that matter be it any other conscious state, there is/are something it is like to be in those states, and it takes us no time to understand what I am talking about here, if we have

⁹ Chalmers, “The Meta-Problem of Consciousness,” 6.

¹⁰ Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” 436.

been (or been through) in states similar to the kinds mentioned just above even if not exactly the same as detailed. These *somethings* are what make the conscious states what they are. These elusive feelings of conscious experiences can be called ‘qualia’. Without these, no conscious state is really conscious, at least, as far as our immediate knowledge of conscious experience is concerned. And thus, every conscious state is essentially phenomenally conscious state and consequently, the identification of a system or an organism as being phenomenally conscious, depends on whether there is something it is like to be that system or organism.

The meta-problem of consciousness

The time has now come to again get back to the discussion of the M-PC. So, we have come to know that, the problem of consciousness with reference to what Chalmers discusses the M-PC, is the problem that why physical processes of brain give rise to conscious experiences, which seem to be having characteristics or features completely different from the brain processes (this one is just one of the formulations of the problem and there are available plenty of others, which for the sake of brevity I am not writing here). Brain processes are objectively observable physical phenomena, whereas, conscious experiences are subjective phenomena, at the heart of

which there are subjective feelings or qualia. Now, the M-PC (with specific reference to the hard problem) is *the problem of giving an explanation of why we think that there is this hard problem of consciousness¹¹, or why we think, physical explanations fall short of consciousness, or why we think that consciousness is so hard to explain*, even though we have physical explanations of consciousness available (even if it is not complete) before us, which enjoys having great amount of predictive and explanatory power.

Further analysis of the meta-problem of consciousness

So far we have come to know what the meta-problem of consciousness is all about. It is that, why we think consciousness is such and such (which does not accept the physicalist construal of consciousness) and not otherwise (for the time being, consider the physicalist construal only) or that it can't ever be, or that, why we think that it is hard to explain, or that, why we think that the physical explanations, no matter whatever particular kind they are, fail to do justice to the phenomenon of consciousness in terms of construal of the true nature, while explaining it. In short, *it is a problem about our thoughts regarding consciousness* that refrain us from being

¹¹ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 6.

satisfied with or accepting without any qualm, the physical explanation(s) of consciousness.

From thoughts to expressions

Now, thoughts are of such nature that, apart from my own case or for that matter, each one's personal cases (because each and every subject's thoughts are known by the respective subjects in the most direct, immediate and subjective fashion)¹², they cannot be known (objectively, by people other than the subject him/herself) until and unless they are vent out verbally by the subject. The same applies to the thoughts about consciousness as well like any other thought. Apart from each one's personal cases, to know about others' similar kind of thoughts regarding consciousness, which pester us so badly and do not let us be at peace with the physical explanations of consciousness, *verbal reports* are the only source and the most objective data¹³ in this regard. The verbal reports which specifically describe or express things about consciousness, are called the *phenomenal reports*¹⁴. These phenomenal reports are the particular kind of verbal reports, which we

¹² This too could be an illusion (albeit, we have no good reason to support the claims, both in favour and against) as many illusionists about consciousness think. But let us not be parochial in any way while discussing the problem at hand and accept this as a matter of fact to proceed further with the discussion.

¹³ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

should be taking into consideration keeping in mind its relevance in the issue at hand. Expressing these phenomenal reports just like expressing any other verbal reports, is a kind of behavior.

Second approximation of the meta-problem of consciousness

Another way of describing the M-PC, thus is, explaining these phenomenal reports.¹⁵ Now if we again remember the distinction between the hard and the soft problems of consciousness and then ponder a bit more over this particular formulation of the M-PC, i.e., the problem of explaining the phenomenal reports, then it won't take us much time to realize that, these phenomenal reports being behavioural (and as far as the broader categorization is concerned, it is Physical) in nature, as it has already been said earlier, allows us to give fully satisfactory physical explanation of it, which leaves nothing (physical) unexplained of it behind, and thus, this M-PC is actually one of the soft problems. To believe this, it is required from us to have minimum faith in what I call '*Physicalist/Materialist intuition*'¹⁶. Here I am not going to discuss about how credible and justified such an

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ It is the pre-theoretical supposition that, the reality is essentially physical and thus every single real/physical phenomenon can be explained away satisfactorily fully in physical terms without postulating anything beyond the palpable reality.

intuition is. Now, this chore of explaining the phenomenal reports is identified as the soft problem of consciousness, and so is the M-PC as or when understood in terms the former. It is because of the fact that, this involves identifying the relevant sort of underlying structure of the brain states or the functions responsible for us having such thoughts or kind of thoughts (about consciousness), and accomplishing such a task seems quite feasible.

The nature of the meta-problem of consciousness

So, the meta-problem of the *hard problem* of consciousness now comes out to be a *soft problem* itself and thus not much perplexing. In an uber-optimistic way like many scientists and philosophers think, we too might think that the solution to the M-PC, will be able to solve the hard problem of consciousness, as such a solution will be able to provide us with a neurophysiological explanation for which consciousness appears to us in a completely different way than how it really (according to the physical explanation) is. But much to our disappointment, that is not the case, as the M-PC deals nothing with the phenomenon of consciousness itself, but with how it appears to us the way it does. To explain it further for better understanding, it can be said that, the hard problem talks about or is about

the nature of the phenomenon of consciousness itself, whereas the meta-problem of consciousness does not and is particularly concerned with knowing why consciousness appears to us in certain specific ways. And thus, logically it is fatuous to expect the solution to the M-PC to resolve the problem of the nature of consciousness, something that it is not at all concerned about or intends to solve.

But, what we can afford to expect is that, the solution to the M-PC might be able to tell us many important things about the HPC and in virtue of it, in an indirect manner, about the nature¹⁷ of consciousness, and can help us solving the HPC even if it fails to solve it directly.

What is so special about the meta-problem of consciousness?

Another important thing is that, whereas there is no unity of opinions among the people, concerned with the problem of consciousness, regarding its nature and every single adept seems to be having their own version of the

¹⁷ I personally believe this, because I think that thoughts are not only guided by their underlying processes taking place in the brain, but the object of the thoughts also play an important role in determining the nature of the thoughts. And thus by scrupulously studying the physical structure or the underlying function of the thoughts we may learn at least something about the nature of the object of the thought. But to know about something exclusively and in great details, that something is to be taken as the exclusive object of research. The same applies in the context of the problem of consciousness as well and because of this, it has been written earlier in the last paragraph that the solution to the M-PC cannot solve the HPC.

problem, the M-PC is same for everyone.¹⁸ Irrespective of the goadings or influences of the kind of commitments that experts belonging to different fields have, in terms of being consistent with the rudiments or elemental tenets of their respective fields, while construing consciousness, the M-PC is really same for everyone and thus it brings everyone to the same place and gives a chance to start afresh researching about the nature of consciousness. Of course differences are to be discerned in terms of the different approaches being taken to study the problem (of consciousness) among the disciplines, but to be able to focus on a single problem and being in agreement about its nature with others concerned, in itself a big achievement, the gradual proceedings of which will eventually lead us to the solution, I hope. And here lies the importance of the M-PC, that it formulates the problem of consciousness in a completely novel and interesting way, keeping intimacy with the perplexing HPC (although not necessarily being another version of it), and which in turn makes the problem of consciousness, the same problem for everyone (no matter whether their beliefs in the HPC-SPC distinction is strong or not) keeping room for everyone to try and solve the problem.

¹⁸ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 11.

From problem/phenomenal reports to problem intuitions

The deeper analysis of the M-PC tells us about what exactly is to be researched about here. It cannot be the phenomenal reports themselves, since the phenomenal reports are behavioural in nature and behaviours are such that can so easily be emulated or suppressed (without having the authentic dispositions).¹⁹ It is the underlying dispositions that precede such behaviours, which should be studied.

Chalmers calls these ‘dispositions to make the phenomenal reports’, the ‘*problem intuitions*’.²⁰ These problem intuitions, as Chalmers says, can be yielded by some pre-theoretical inferences²¹ and thus our task would be to assess their credibility. But, are we to take into consideration any random dispositions to make phenomenal reports, or some specific kind only? Phenomenal reports could be any report about our consciousness or about any conscious state, including feelings, mental states, interoceptions and thus ‘phenomenal reports’ cover a multitude of reports about consciousness, under its umbrella. Thus, as it has already been said in some other ways earlier, we are to take only those dispositions to make phenomenal reports, which express opinions and judgments about the problem itself, such as,

¹⁹ This is one of the major arguments that have been brought against the variety of materialism called ‘philosophical behaviourism’.

²⁰ Chalmers, “The Meta-Problem of Consciousness,” 11.

²¹ Ibid.

‘consciousness is hard to explain’, ‘consciousness cannot be (fully) physical’, ‘qualia are essential to consciousness’.

The variety of problem intuitions

Now that we have fixed our minds to focus specifically on the problem intuition, but much to our surprise there is not a single problem to concentrate upon, but many. Chalmers²² mentions few of those, which are, the *explanatory* intuition²³, the *gap* intuition²⁴, the *anti-functional* intuition²⁵, the *metaphysical* intuition²⁶, the *dualist* intuition²⁷, the *fundamentality* intuition²⁸, the *knowledge* intuition²⁹, the *first-person knowledge* intuition³⁰, the *third person ignorance* intuition³¹, the *modal*

²² Chalmers, “The Meta-Problem of Consciousness,” 12.

²³ It holds (the belief) that, consciousness is essentially a phenomenon that is hard to explain.

²⁴ It holds (the belief) that, the explanations of the functions cannot suffice to have an explanation of consciousness.

²⁵ It holds (the belief) that, physical functions cannot be equated with consciousness.

²⁶ It holds (the belief) that, consciousness is metaphysically an independent phenomenon than the physical.

²⁷ It holds (the belief) that, reality is composed of two essentially different fundamentals.

²⁸ It holds (the belief) that, consciousness is fundamental or too simple to be explained.

²⁹ It holds (the belief) that, the knowledge of physical facts does not provide us with the knowledge of consciousness.

³⁰ It holds (the belief) that, consciousness provides special and essential knowledge about it from the first-person perspective.

³¹ It holds (the belief) that, consciousness cannot be known fully from their-person perspective or that we cannot have complete knowledge of others’ consciousness.

intuition³², the *zombie* intuition³³, the *inverted spectrum* intuition³⁴. All of these intuitions, though slightly different from each other, are similar in one respect, that, they pose challenges to the physicalist theories of consciousness and divulges their inability to account for consciousness.

Are these intuitions particularly of philosophers?

The adumbrated intuitions that Chalmers talked about, says Chalmers, can be tagged as being specifically that of the philosophers.³⁵ But Chalmers does not hold the same and is of the opinion that, such intuitions can be seen to be well-spread beyond the realm of philosophy. However, even within the domain of philosophy or within the community of philosophers, they are not to be found in everyone, as it is evident from there being many people who have got no problem with the physicalist theories of consciousness. So, though it is quite clear that, these intuitions are not

³² It holds (the belief) that, consciousness can be conceived (without giving rise to any logical contradiction) without physical processes.

³³ It holds (the belief) that, physically isomorphic (with the conscious beings) organisms that lack consciousness are conceivable.

³⁴It holds (the belief) that, the physical isomorphism cannot lead us to have isomorphic experiences and that the essential qualities of consciousness are so different than the physics of brain that the latter cannot account for the former.

³⁵ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 13.

particularly of philosophers, at the same time we should not hesitate to accept the fact that such intuitions are not universal³⁶ either.

The tasks under the meta-problem of consciousness project

Thus, under the project of M-PC, our task would be to know, (i) how problem intuitions are produced; (ii) whether or not these intuitions are shared by all or in other words whether these are universal or not; and (iii) if universal, then why, and even if not and these are intuitions found in some people only, still, why those people have such intuitions whereas others don't.

The relevant sort of explanation

But the most important thing is to decide, before we can start our investigation, what sort of explanation we want to consider as an explanation. Explanations can be of quite a few varieties. For example, it too could be an explanation of the problem of consciousness that, we experience the

³⁶ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 14.

problematic features of consciousness, because consciousness as a phenomenon, indeed has got such problematic features. But are we looking for an explanation of this kind? Chalmers says that, we are not. As far as the plan of Chalmers is concerned, he seeks explanations of the problem intuitions in topic-neutral terms³⁷. And by ‘topic-neutral terms’, Chalmers specifically means neuronal or neurophysiological terms. The results of such an experiment is going to be evolutionary as it will, we expect, be able to tell us whether at all it is possible to have a neurophysiological explanation of us having such problem intuitions. Following an analytical analysis, from problem/phenomenal reports (verbal) we have arrived at the concept of problem intuitions, which are believed to be more fundamental than the former and responsible for yielding the former, and thus the object of our investigation. Keeping faith on the physicalist/materialist intuition, we can believe that, the phenomenal reports which are of physical nature, can only rise from phenomena (problem intuitions), that too are physical in nature. That is to say that, the problem intuitions are of physical nature and thus could be given a fully satisfactory account in neurological physical terms alone.

³⁷ As Chalmers says, roughly, the terms that do not mention consciousness.

The possible solutions of the M-PC

Now that we have been able to fix our mind about (i) the kind of *problem* we are concerned (and moreover which is same for everyone concerned about consciousness, and consequently there is no fear of time being wasted on deciding the nature of the problem), (ii) and the kind of *explanation* that is expected to be given to decimate the enigma related to consciousness; it is the pat time to have a look at the potential solutions, that are being proposed and talked about with the intent of probing the credibility of, and see how exactly, or following what sort of typical manoeuvre the problems are foreseen to be solved in a theoretical sense.

The first one to start with is the *introspective model*³⁸. According to this particular strategy, our conscious states are self-representational in nature. To facilitate it for better understanding, let us say that, the various conscious processes that take place within³⁹ us, are represented to us in the most immediate and direct manner and such is the nature of such representations that they are particularly and only known (directly and immediately) by the subjects of whom they are. The innerness or internality of the consciousness or thoughts is not to be understood in terms of the

³⁸ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 20.

³⁹ Not necessarily because there is a causal relation of it with or causal dependence of it on the brain, and which is indeed placed inside our body, particularly within the skull; but because of the fact that, thoughts are always innate in nature to every conscious subject (and thus is accessible only by the subject whose consciousness is responsible for it).

demarcation of the *domain within skin*⁴⁰ and the *domain outside the skin*⁴¹ cordoned by the *skin* itself; but to be understood in terms of the distinction between the *domain of intangible mental phenomena or thoughts* and the *domain of palpable physical phenomena*. The innerness of consciousness is always to be understood with reference to the later dichotomy, which is at the heart of the hard problem of consciousness, and with respect to what Chalmers formulated the M-PC. Or else, if the innerness of consciousness is understood in terms of the former dichotomy, with reference to the fence of the skin, then, there seems to exist no big problem to be resolved and the scientists could so easily account for it by pointing to the brain, placed within the skull or any internal (within the fence of skin) physical phenomenon or organ.

Now, let us get back to the discussion on the introspective model itself and see how exactly it talks about solving the M-PC. So far, we have come to know that, it says that, the conscious states are representational in nature. For example, if at a time something is *represented* (representation is a conscious state or process) to our consciousness, apart from having the representation, we also know that, something is being represented or about the (process of) representation itself; or, if at a time we are *pondering*

⁴⁰ The ghettoized world of muscles, bones, veinal and neuronal networks, and all sorts of microphysical elements and functions beneath the skin, fenced by the skin itself from all the sides and which is subject to objective observation (when the curtain of the skin is removed).

⁴¹ The world outside the fringes of skin, and which too like the one within, is objectively observable.

(conscious state or process) over something or *judging* (conscious state or process) something, apart from (performing the functions of) pondering or judging and being aware of the ‘object of *thoughts*^{42,43}, we also get aware of or get the representation of the processes of pondering or judging or for that matter of any other conscious states or processes. This is indeed very much needed to be aware of the various conscious processes, for us to have the knowledge of what conscious state we are in at a given time. Now, about these representations of various conscious states, we get to know through *introspection*⁴⁴. The same applies to the knowledge of problem intuitions. That is to say, the various problem intuitions that we have related to consciousness, about those too, we get to know through introspection. Now, in order to solve the M-PC, the task of the researchers talking about the introspective model, would be to explain in topic-neutral terms, that how we represent our own consciousness or conscious states or how (and why too) reports about our internal conscious states are made and particularly those which give rise to the problem intuitions or about the problems.

On the other hand, even if we accept that, introspection does not reveal to us the real nature of consciousness or that the real features of consciousness are not introspectable, like many illusionists claim, still we

⁴² In the widest sense it refers to all the possible kinds of conscious states.

⁴³ Objects, that the consciousness is directed towards or the conscious states are about.

⁴⁴ The faculty that lets the conscious subjects be aware of the thoughts.

will have to account for, in topic-neutral neurophysiological terms that why they are not introspectable.

Adducing the argument of the *independent roles*⁴⁵ of both the phenomenal states and the neuronal states in our cognitive life, the M-PC can be explained. To be more clear and specific, this particular argument says that, our thoughts are dependent on two sorts of elements, which are equally important and responsible for the way our thoughts are, but conceiving one does not necessarily compel us to conceive the other, and there lies the problem. These two sorts of elements are on the one hand, *neurons* and *neuronal activities*; and on the other, the *phenomenal aspect of consciousness* or *qualia*. Among these two sorts of elements, the former one plays the fundamental causal role for yielding consciousness or various conscious states; and the latter one works to stoke the experiential side of consciousness and giving it the experiential nature. Now, in experiences, there seems to be present something or some features, completely distinct from that of the physical aspect of it, and thus there is a problem. So far so good. But, even if so the case is, to solve the M-PC, the patrons of this model of consciousness will have to explain in topic-neutral terms, that why, even though being essential to consciousness, besides the neuronal activities, the phenomenal aspect seems to be having features, that are diametrically opposed to that the features possessed by neuronal (basis) activities or aspect

⁴⁵ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 22.

and why it (phenomenal aspect) fails to reveal to us the real nature of consciousness. Even if we expect qualia to be deceitful in nature, we will have to see whether a fully physical explanation of such illusions are possible in neurophysiological terms. If we can succeed with this, the M-PC is going to get resolved.

Another possible solution, by adding a special feature to the neuronal activities, which is believed to be the underlying phenomena responsible for giving rise to consciousness by the materialists, tries to account for the M-PC. The feature that is being added to or is being expected to be essential of the neuronal activities, is the *introspective opacity*⁴⁶. It is because of this property of the neuronal activities, that they are not found to be existent through introspection, unlike the qualia. Many of the materialists suggest that, those who are anti-materialist about consciousness, they somehow surmise from the fact that, *they do not introspect consciousness as brain processes*, the fact that, *they introspect consciousness to be non-brain processes*.⁴⁷ Needless to say, there clearly seems to be something extremely wrong with this inference and thus is called a surmise. But is that what the anti-materialists are saying about consciousness? May be there could be some anti-materialists of consciousness who adhere to such inference, but that is not what all the anti-materialists of consciousness are saying bringing in the concept of introspection. Or maybe the above was just a strawman

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

version of the kind of argument that the anti-materialists adduce. The original *argument from introspection*⁴⁸, which is aided by the *Leibniz' law*⁴⁹, says that, if neuronal activities were consciousness, as it is being claimed by the reductive materialists in the identity theory, then neuronal activities would have had all the features or properties in common with consciousness, being identical to consciousness or in virtue of having the relation of identity with that of consciousness. Now, unlike consciousness, which is introspectable, the neuronal activities can clearly be seen to be not so. So, based on this difference, the anti-materialists challenge the kind of identity that is being accepted to be held between neuronal activities and the conscious states, by the materialists of identity theorist kind. Even this argument has a long thread of dialogue exchange and here I am not going to get into the details of that debate in terms of mentioning all the arguments and the counter arguments that were adduced.

But even if we accept the introspective opacity model of the neuronal activities, the important task would be to see whether any satisfactory physical explanation of it⁵⁰ in topic-neutral terms, is possible to be given or not and also to explain in topic-neutral terms that why even though being ontologically identical to consciousness or conscious states, the neuronal activities seem to be lacking one property or feature that consciousness

⁴⁸ Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 29.

⁴⁹ According to this law, identical things, must have all the properties in common, as ontologically they are the one and the same thing.

⁵⁰ The introspective opacity of the neuronal activities.

seems to be possessing so clearly. If we can satisfactorily account for this, then by default this would be a solution to the M-PC.

Another similar strategy would be to account for the *immediateness of the phenomenal concepts or qualia to our epistemic access*. We have *immediate knowledge*⁵¹ of our phenomenal states or qualia, and for having the knowledge (through introspection) of these states or qualities of consciousness, in other words; we never have to depend on anything. But not so is the case with the knowledge of the neuronal states.

It seems quite satisfactorily rational that this immediateness of the knowledge of the phenomenal states itself provides the justification for these sort of experiences, as such is the way these are experienced. For example, if something, say a book by Murakami, is in front of me and I see it being on the table and based on this experience I say “there is a book by Murakami on the table”, apart from saying that, “I see or experience the book by Murakami on the table” there is no other and best justification that I can provide. It sounds all good and right. Isn’t it quite a good explanation? If we keep aside the abnormal cases of the person (perceiver) being a schizophrenic or having an illusion or otherwise, this is quite a good argument for justifying claims that are based on our experience.

⁵¹ Chalmers, “The Meta-Problem of Consciousness,” 23.

But remember the kind of explanation we decided to be taking into consideration for the purpose of solving the M-PC. It is the topic-neutral explanations in neurophysiological terms. Moreover, unlike the adumbrated case of seeing a book by Murakami on the table, in case of experience of consciousness per se, or qualia in particular, there involves (technically) the fallacy of *circulus in demonstrando* in serving the ‘*experiential argument*’⁵², as there, both the subject and the object (of experience) is consciousness and thus, consequently, the question might rise that how consciousness can itself provide the justification about (the experience of) consciousness.

So, as opposed to the last project of finding reason for the opaqueness of the neuronal activities, in this project, our task would be to account for the immediateness of the qualia or consciousness to our epistemic access. Either ways, we will be able to find the reason for which there is difference between these two sorts of phenomena, which are only seemingly different⁵³ but actually not, at least, as far as the claim of materialism (about consciousness) is concerned; and eventually that is going to help us solve the M-PC.

Another potential solution sees the *phenomenal properties* (the elements, which are responsible for us having the problem intuitions or for providing us with the clues to make us wary of the relation of identity

⁵² Where for justifying the nature of the perceived things, ‘as it is perceived that way’ sort of arguments is being adduced.

⁵³ Different, because each of them seems to be possessing qualities that are not seen to be present in the other, for example, while neuronal activities are opaque to introspection, the phenomenal states are not so; and on the other hand, while the phenomenal states provide us immediate knowledge of it, the neuronal states do not.

between the neuronal activities taking place in the brain and the consciousness) of experience or conscious experience as *primitive qualities*⁵⁴ that are not actually there, but serve some *pragmatic purposes* and creating an illusion of *consciousness-neuronal activity duality*. The primitive qualities, a.k.a., the phenomenal properties being illusional⁵⁵ in nature, give rise to the illusion of consciousness-neuronal activities duality. At the level of experience, we do not have access to the neuronal level and whatever functions or activities take place in there. But still, without having any knowledge of the neuronal activities, we can so well sense and tell the differences between the different conscious states. And there lies the importance of the phenomenal properties that they help us sense these differences between different conscious states. This is the special pragmatic purpose that they serve.

But this is more of a speculation than a justification. And thus, our task would be to see whether a satisfying neurophysiological explanation of why and how these properties perform the kind of functions they are claimed to perform, to help us tell the differences or identities between conscious states of different kinds and of same kind respectively, and why the neuronal

⁵⁴ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 25.

⁵⁵ Phenomenal properties are called 'illusional properties' of consciousness or conscious experience, in the sense that, they are no real qualities of them (consciousness or conscious experience) but only a mere appearance.

activities, though being foundational in nature in yielding consciousness, as claimed, are not sufficient for performing such functions.

Some talk of the fatuous act of mistaking *the properties of the objects of consciousness* or conscious thoughts to be *the properties of consciousness itself*, to account for our problem intuitions. This view holds such mistakes to be responsible for ascribing such qualities that are not at all of consciousness and consequently for creating the illusion of consciousness-neuronal activities dichotomy. To explain it more luridly it can be said that, according to this suggestion, when we describe the properties of consciousness, we actually describe the properties of the objects that consciousness is directed towards or the conscious states are about, for example the redness of a red apple, or the smell of a ripe jackfruit. And thus, since there are no special properties of consciousness as redness and its ilk, the physical explanation of consciousness leaves nothing of it unexplained and is complete. But, even if so is the case, there should be satisfactory account in topic-neutral physical terms for why we think such properties to be of consciousness, though in reality it (consciousness) has no connection with those.

This solution seems to be taking cues from the *transparency theory*⁵⁶ of consciousness (or of experience or of conscious experience), according to which, consciousness is transparent to the (conscious) subjects and thus it is

⁵⁶ Velmans and Schneider, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, 30.

not possible for the subjects to focus exclusively on consciousness only. No matter how hard the subject try to focus specifically and only on consciousness, they end up focusing on consciousness along with the objects of it. A metaphor of sheet of glass might help us to understand this account of consciousness in a better way. According to this metaphor, the consciousness (conscious experiences) is like a transparent sheet of glass, and thus no matter how hard one tries to concentrate on the properties that it possesses, he/she (subject) actually looks or sees through it (the sheet of glass) and whatever is or is placed behind the sheet of glass sees or experiences their properties only. The objects behind the sheet of glass can be understood as the object of consciousness in the case of conscious experiences.

But even if we accept that, the properties that we think are of consciousness, are actually not its, and consequently there is nothing like 'red experience', with reference to the visual experiences of red objects or similar things like this, the important point is and which can hardly be denied that, there is something it is like to feel (in the most subjective fashion) when one (subject) is in a conscious experiential state. Now the important task would be to account for these feelings associated with conscious experiences, in topic-neutral physical terms. And even if we accept those feelings to be illusions, there must be explanation of why we think that we have such feelings, and the nature of the explanation should be topic-neutral.

Further elucidation and another approximation of the M-PC

We have already discussed about the nature of the M-PC in one of the earlier sections and have found it to be an SPC, in terms of the kind of solution (physical/functional) that it seeks. We have also seen that, as far as Chalmers' initial adumbration of the M-PC is concerned, The M-PC has been understood in terms of the HPC, or more specifically as a problem about the HPC. Moreover, the HPC too, has been understood in a very specific sense (though there had been no allusion to the other senses of **it** being less capable of explaining the *heart and the soul* of the problem, but only one, among the myriad ways of describing the problem has been taken into consideration which was thought to be the best way of explaining it in the context of explaining the M-PC, or which was thought to be the best one to help us understand the M-PC). The *HPC* as we have seen, has been understood as the *problem intuitions*, and the *M-PC* has been understood as *the problem of why we have such problem intuitions*.

The initial understanding of the M-PC has given us clues, which compelled us to consider it as an *easy* or *soft* problem of consciousness. It is because, identifying the relevant sort of functions (believed to be)

responsible for yielding such problem intuitions in us, had been accepted as the potential solution of the M-PC.

It is beyond every ordinary doubt that there is a close tie between the HPC and the M-PC, and the reason is quite clear.⁵⁷ It is because, the later has been understood in terms of the former, as we have read several times in many lines which precede the present paragraph. Now there are some prodigies in the field, who, depending upon this close relation between the HPC and the M-PC, believe the *solution to the M-PC* to be capable of solving away the HPC as well.⁵⁸ And these prodigies are mainly *illusionists* about consciousness.⁵⁹ Illusionists about consciousness typically hold the belief that, consciousness (the way it is being envisaged by the anti-physicalists⁶⁰) is nothing, but just an illusion or that the special features (for example, the subjective or the experiential features), which seem to be posing challenges to the physical account of consciousness, are nothing but illusions. These are illusions in the sense that, such features are no real features of consciousness, but the mere product of irrational fancy of some philosophers⁶¹.

⁵⁷ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 35.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶⁰ being an anti-physicalist does not necessarily mean holding the belief that, there is no physical basis of consciousness or that physics (of brain particularly) has got no role to play in consciousness. Although there could be anti-physicalists, who snub the physical basis of consciousness. But what is more important of all the claims made by the anti-physicalists is that, consciousness cannot fully be understood in physical terms and thus all the forceful activities of reducing the phenomenon of consciousness into physical phenomenon are equally culpable for not doing explanatory justice to the phenomenon of consciousness.

⁶¹ Though there have been many accusations of such intuitions being typically of the philosophers, in the section 'Are these intuitions particularly of philosophers?', it has been shown that, such problem intuitions are reported to be there in many people, albeit, not in

The impetus that goads the illusionists to hold such a belief⁶² is the belief that, the *neuronal functions* which form the basis of consciousness and thus in virtue of it occupies the central and the fundamental position in the phenomenon of and in the study of consciousness, must be able to explain the whole of *it*⁶³, leaving nothing behind; or every aspect of it or everything related to it. Now the *problem intuitions* being *about* or *related to* and *dependent*⁶⁴ on consciousness, too must be explained satisfactorily in terms of the underlying neuronal functions in pure physical terms.

But, there still remains the big problem which the illusionists have failed to pay heed to, though it is quite conspicuous. As far as the formal formulation of the distinction between the HPC and the SPC by Chalmers is concerned, the HPC is completely different in nature than the SPCs and thus none of the solutions to the SPC can satisfactorily explain away the HPC. Now the MPC being an SPC, in terms of its nature, how is it possible for the solutions of the M-PC to be able to solve the HPC? Does not the claim of the illusionists now seem and sound to be extremely preposterous? Yes, it clearly does, at least in my opinion and I guess there is no need of adducing the argument all over again.

all, even in those, who have little or no knowledge of or about academic philosophy and philosophers.

⁶² The belief that, the solution to the M-PC will solve the HPC.

⁶³ Consciousness.

⁶⁴ It is heuristically and even intellectually believed that, no matter whatever we do, be it as trivial as cutting a snippet of cake with a knife or as intellectual or scholarly as solving some intricate advanced mathematical problems or pondering over the origin of the cosmos, at the back of those, consciousness works as the background (fundamental) function.

But, may be saying that, “the illusionists failed to pay heed to the *HPC-SPC distinction*” is not the right thing to say, as the illusionists rather choose or afford not to pay heed to such a distinction, which according to them, makes no sense. The illusionists do not accept the HPC-SPC distinction. For them, if there are at all problems about consciousness, then all of those are soft problems. They are not even going to call those, the ‘soft problems’ as calling those by this name presupposes that very distinction. Soft problems are no soft problems until and unless there are hard problems, with reference to what, those are called the ‘soft problems’.

So without being way too optimistic about the solution to the M-PC bringing along the solution to the HPC, at most what we can expect for the time being, is that, the solution to the M-PC might help us to know a really great deal about the HPC and can eventually help us to solve the HPC the way it deserves to be.

Let us now try to understand the M-PC in a way which we have not discussed before and which in terms of its formulation, differs from all of the earlier approximations of the same. Like the other approximations, here too the *problem intuition(s)* and *the judgments about them* enjoy occupying the central position. But, unlike the other mentioned approximations, this one is more specific and directly talks about explaining *how in making such judgments about the problem intuitions, the accepted or believed basis of*

consciousness (no matter whatever it is) of a given system, plays the central role.

This formulation of the M-PC could also be called the *meta-problem challenge*⁶⁵ (for theories of consciousness), as Chalmers himself has called.⁶⁶

For example, if a system recognizes the *neuronal functions* to be the *basis of consciousness*, then the *meta-problem challenge* for that particular system would be to explain *how in making the judgments about problem intuitions, the neuronal functions play the central role.*

Divulging an important fact about M-PC

A close look and a scrupulous analysis of the latest approximation of the M-PC, which, in my opinion, the best elucidation of it, can reveal a lot about the M-PC and help us understand it in a way, better than all the earlier. We have already mentioned that, the M-PC is said to be of the nature of SPC, in terms of the kind of solution that it requires or demands. And thus, M-PC being a soft problem in nature, it's solutions are prognosticated to be falling short of the solution of the HPC, at least in principle. But, now let us rivet our attention from the *solutions and their nature* (of M-PC), to the *mode of*

⁶⁵ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 36.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

the enquiry echoed in every formulation of the M-PC. If we delve really deep into the kind of enquiry being essential to all the formulation of the M-PC, in terms of logical analysis, then we will find that, at the core of all the formulations, there is the ‘*why*’⁶⁷ questions, e.g., *why we have the problem intuitions*; or, *why we cannot be satisfied with the physical expositions of consciousness*. Now, if we reminisce the distinction between the HPC and the SPC, it will not take us much time to remember that, the *why* mode of enquiry is essential to the HPC. So, one very important point about the nature of the M-PC to note here is that, though in terms of the sort of solution that the M-PC demands, M-PC is to be treated as an SPC, but, on the other hand, as far as the essential mode of enquiry of the M-PC is concerned, it is an HPC.

Illusionism v/s Realism and the meta-problem challenge

For the sake of better and clear understanding, let us now relegate the various expositions of consciousness into two broader categories, which are, (i) *Illusionism* and (ii) *Realism*, keeping the minute differences among them aside.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 6.

Illusionism about consciousness regards consciousness as illusion, in the sense of not being real. But, we must remember that, the illusionists rescind consciousness in a special sense (or a special sort of consciousness, which is, phenomenal consciousness), when it is envisaged to be something more than or over and above the accepted basis (of consciousness) of a given system, as having a close and inseparable relation with some special features (which the available ordinary accounts⁶⁸ fail to account for), such as, phenomenality or first-person perspective. And when it (consciousness) is understood completely in terms of the accepted basis or fundamentals of a given system or as nothing more than or over and above the accepted basis or fundamentals (of a given system, of course), the illusionists seem to be having no discomfort with the concept of consciousness.

One of the major problems of illusionism is that, it outrightly rejects the felt aspect of consciousness, albeit, for no good reason. But, if there is no felt aspect of being conscious or being in conscious states, then *feeling pains*⁶⁹ would have questioned our sanity, though it does not at all. The fact

⁶⁸ Mainly, of physical sort.

⁶⁹ Here, I have (particularly) taken the instance of the experience of pain as pain is such a phenomenon, which is experienced by almost everyone in some form or the other, and there can hardly be any practical doubt to question its existence. Moreover, pain is one of the variety of conscious states (and thus, whatever is true of pain states, being a conscious state, is true of all, such as, the **felt aspect** at hand) that we go through innumerable times during our lifetime and which has got a very popular appeal because of its mundane nature.

that everyone feels pains, proves the claim of illusionism to be staggeringly false.⁷⁰

On the other hand, Realism about consciousness, accepts the phenomenon as being real with all the special enigmatic⁷¹ features that come along. This *ism* about consciousness, tries not to abrogate the special features of consciousness simply because of the fact that, we find ourselves equipped with no apparatus to study them systematically. Even if that is so the case, that we have no proper method and apparatus to study the special qualities of consciousness, that we get immediately and inevitably in every conscious experience, it is no good reason to annul such features and the phenomenon of consciousness, when understood in terms of them. Rather, it is to be seen as a major drawback of all the existent systems of science⁷².

The basic point of difference between illusionism and realism about consciousness is that, while illusionism snubs out the special features of consciousness and tries to make sense of it as being separated from those; the realism about consciousness, without being affected by any theoretical prejudice, tries to understand the phenomenon of consciousness as the potpourri of all the features, special or trivial, that it comes with or appears to be intimately associated with in our experience.

⁷⁰ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 53.

⁷¹ Enigmatic, in the sense that, no existent (scientific) theory till date can account for them.

⁷² Here, the word 'Science' has been used in the broadest sense, which includes all the disciplines that systematically study all the phenomena under the sun and try to appropriate the nature of the reality.

Now, if we are to choose the best (comparatively) ism about consciousness among these two isms, in terms of including all the aspects of the phenomenon of consciousness for the purpose of construing its true nature, then realism conspicuously seems to be the best candidate to acquire the paramount position. Realism talks about the uber-importance of taking into consideration the *phenomenal* and the *experiential* aspects of consciousness. Right now, it is not possible for the realists to call these aspects or features, the ‘essential features’ of consciousness, but, these are undoubtedly the inseparable aspects of it. Even though the realists do not, in any clear term, opine these features of consciousness to be its essential features, but what is anticipated is that, they are prone to make such a claim. So, in case of the realist account of consciousness, the meta-problem challenge would be to account for how in making the judgments about the problem intuitions, the phenomenal and the experiential aspects of consciousness play the central role.

One last approximation of the M-PC

From various approximations of the M-PC that we have been able to come up with in due course, I guess we have been able to learn a great deal about it and which in turn helped us to engage more analytically and critically

with the issue at hand. Now, let us consider one last approximation of it, according to which, the *M-PC involves explaining our problem intuitions in terms of meta-problem processes*⁷³, which are characterized by *topic-neutrality*. In the most general way, the *phenomenon to explain our problem intuitions* are called ‘*meta-problem processes*’, since we have no clue, at least for the time being, about which phenomena are (going to be discovered to be) the best candidate for this task.

The M-PC and Consciousness

It has been discussed quite a number of times, that, what sort of relation M-PC has with the HPC and how the solution to the M-PC can illumine the bleakest trajectories to the solution of the HPC. But what about consciousness? At the end of the day, all the problems that we have discussed hither and tither in the present context, revolve around the concept of consciousness. All that we want is nothing but having a fully satisfactory account of the nature of consciousness. So the important question is, how can the findings of the meta-problem project or the solution of the M-PC help us know about the nature of the phenomenon of consciousness per se? Now, according to one school of thinking, the answer to this question is, the

⁷³ Meta-problem processes could be any process, which (functionally) explains how the problem intuitions are brought about.

solution to the M-PC will be the ultimate solution for the problem of consciousness and thus such a solution will by default, reveal the true nature of the phenomenon of consciousness to us. According to the adherents of this belief, if we have concrete research findings at the end of the meta-problem project, we would be able to know how rationally grounded the problem intuitions are, and if we can account for the problem intuitions in terms of the accepted basis for consciousness of any available system (or systems that are going to come into being in near or far future) then the problem intuitions being explained satisfactorily in terms of the expected basis, in principle, will be discovered to be having no independent existence apart from that basis and thus the pestering problem intuitions will be discovered to be futile to pose any challenge to the theory that expounds the fundamentality of such basis. According to this way of thinking, with the advent of such a solution, there would be the extermination of the *SPC-HPC dichotomy* and thus there would be no question of that solution to be a solution of an SPC.

However, there is another opinion regarding the same, according to which the solution to the M-PC though would not directly be able to solve the HPC, but in virtue of M-PC having close and important ties with the HPC, the solution of the M-PC will shed enormous amount of light in terms of revealing a lot of important facts about the HPC. And such a revelation about the HPC can lead us to have the nature of the phenomenon of consciousness unfolded before us. According to this view, the M-PC is

actually the problem of explaining why we have certain problem intuitions about consciousness and not any about knowing the nature of consciousness. And thus, the solution to such a problem can at most explain why we conceive consciousness, a specific way only and not the other, but can never reveal to us what the nature of consciousness is.

Menaces to the meta-problem project

It is by now quite clear that, the meta-problem poses an inexorable challenge to all the existent consciousness theories and to all that are still waiting on the verge of existence. Though the M-PC seems to on a par with the HPC in terms of posing similar sort of challenge to the consciousness theories, in principle, the M-PC can have a solution in physical functional terms, of course, if at all possible. But there are some possible challenges that the meta-problem might have to face to prove its credibility. Chalmers himself has mentioned few of those.⁷⁴ The common tendency of all of these challenges is to show the M-PC as being no special problem besides the general (soft) problems related to consciousness that involve providing functional expositions. So let us try to have a quick look at those. For the sake of brevity, here I am not going to discuss the challenges (as mentioned

⁷⁴ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 41.

by Chalmers) separately but in a motley fashion, because I think some of the challenges have really close ties with one another.

The M-PC can be accused of not allowing any possible solution to snuff it out.⁷⁵ It is because, the whole idea of M-PC is dependent on the idea of HPC, which in turn is dependent on qualities of consciousness, which are no real properties of it at all and have no real existence. Having a solution of a problem (or not so), presupposes the very existence of that very problem. But, if there is no problem at all, there seems to be no relevance of discussing about its solution. To be simple, this challenge to the M-PC says that, there could be no solution to the problems, which are there not at all. This challenge encompasses the other sorts, which cull out the concepts of HPC and the special features (of consciousness).

Bringing in the concept of *causal impotency* of the *phenomenal states* over meta-problem processes and thus on the problem intuitions, a possible challenge might say that, the problem intuitions are dependent on the meta-problem processes rather than the phenomenal states and if at all the existence of the phenomenal states are to be regarded, then at most they can be considered as being *correlational* with the meta-problem processes, or the basis of consciousness.⁷⁶ It seems very clearly, that how this challenge demotes the phenomenal states in the discussion of the problem intuitions in

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

specific (in the present context) and in the discussion of consciousness in general and in virtue of it, it discards the M-PC which is dependent on the concept of phenomenal states.

By equating the concept of *phenomenality* (which is central to the M-PC) with that of the lower-order *meta-problem functions*, a.k.a., the accepted basis of consciousness of a given system, there could be attempts of avoiding separate explanations of the special features of consciousness and as a corollary to this, the existence of the M-PC will be challenged.⁷⁷ It is because, the phenomenal states are nothing but the lower-order functions and are involved even at the elemental level of functions which yield consciousness, according to the exposition at hand, and the concept of M-PC being heavily and existentially dependent on the concept of independent (of the accepted basis) phenomenal states and there being nothing as such, becomes groundless.

From M-PC to the debunking argument for illusionism

Let us now, for a moment, keep the debate of the possibility of the M-PC aside, and let us accept for the sake of scholarly discussion that, M-

⁷⁷ Ibid., 43.

PC is a real problem. Now, once the reality of this problem is accepted, the important question is, what this problem is all about. Though earlier at some point of time, we have given the answer to this question, let us reiterate it for one more time for the sake of clear discussion. So, All that the meta-problem project wants to find is that, whether or not there being possible a satisfactory explanation of our problem intuitions (about consciousness) in topic-neutral terms, that is to say, in terms of something that does not presuppose consciousness (the explanandum). So, if the findings of the meta-problem project come out to be positive, it could serve as the most important and sturdiest argument in favour of illusionism. Chalmers calls it a *debunking argument*⁷⁸ for illusionism. Let us try to understand it in a perspicuous manner. Illusionism about consciousness claims that, the way consciousness is being expected to be (ontologically) by the anti-physicalists, is nothing, but illusion. Illusionists call consciousness in this specific sense, ‘illusion’, in the sense that, like illusions, consciousness too is not real but a *phony something*. Now if we get a solution to the M-PC, that is, in other words, if we get an explanation of our problem intuitions, where none of the elucidating elements (of that explanation) presupposes consciousness (in that specific sense, mentioned by the illusionists), then our pre-theoretical beliefs about consciousness (that, consciousness possess some special, ineffable, non-reductive features), which are the basis of the problem intuitions, will,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44.

by default, come out to be false. And this is, in a way, supports the claim of illusionism and thus can be used by illusionists as an argument not only to support illusionism, but also to deny realism.

Problems of the debunking argument

There are some practical problems with the debunking argument that we should mention here. The discussion of the problems of debunking argument will provide us reasons for why we cannot use it (as the robust argument, as it has been accepted to be), at least for the time being, to argue against or refute the realism about consciousness. Let us have a discussion on the problems.

The debunking argument is heavily dependent on the hypothetical situation where a topic-neutral explanation of consciousness is possible. The *possibility* of the debunking argument and also its *virility as an argument* is dependent on the possibility of the topic neutral explanation. Now, there being no such explanation (at least, for the time being), there seems to be no such argument being existent. And, practically speaking, if the argument is not existent, how can it be adduced?

The debunking argument is actually nothing but the imagined topic-neutral explanation (of our problem intuitions in specific, and of consciousness in general) *in disguise*, and thus *it* (the debunking argument) will be potent as an argument, if at all it, or, in other words, the topic-neutral explanation comes into being.

On the other hand, even if we imagine for the sake of argument that, the topic-neutral explanations are (currently) available, this is not going to prove that, our beliefs (pre-theoretical) about consciousness are false.⁷⁹ Our beliefs about consciousness are dependent on our immediate awareness of or acquaintance with the same and thus, the topic-neutral explanation, in order to prove our beliefs about consciousness false, must explain our immediate awareness of or direct acquaintance with consciousness.⁸⁰

The topic-neutral explanations, a.k.a, the debunking argument, in order to be really infrangible (in nature) against the attacks of realism, besides enjoying *descriptive independence*⁸¹ (which means, to describe or explain consciousness, it is not dependent on the concept of consciousness), must also prove that phenomenal states/consciousness have no *causal efficacy* over the generation of the judgments about consciousness or that they have no role to play in the constitution of consciousness.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The takeaways

At the end of it all, I feel that, the riveting discussion of the M-PC is doubtlessly edifying. It snuffs out all the doxatic parochialities, the ponderous baggage of which, we have for so long been hauling unnecessarily while trying to understand the problem of consciousness and which kept on decelerating our pace of moving forward. It makes us question all the possible solutions of the problem of consciousness from a neutral point of view.

We have seen that, though M-PC has got a very close relationship with the HPC, which is at the core of the realism of consciousness, it is not at all lenient with realism. It poses the same excruciating challenge to realism as it does to illusionism. It shows us how and why both these isms are alike.

About the solutions to the M-PC, there seems to be equal amount of optimism and pessimism among the adepts of the field. In principle, there seems to be nothing to refrain it from having a solution in topic-neutral terms (for example, functional physical terms). Although, there could be views which reject the idea of there being possible of this problem to have a solution, on the grounds of the impossibility of the problem itself.

About the ability of the possible solution of M-PC to unriddle the enigma of HPC too, there is equal amount of hope and disappointment. For some reason, the advent of the solution of the M-PC will mark the extinction of all the problems (thus, HPC too) related to consciousness, while for some other, it (possible solution of M-PC) is not going to (solve the HPC and every single problem of consciousness), in any logical way.

The M-PC leaves us with the feeling that, both realism and illusionism falling short of consciousness, at least, as far as the development or advancements of both of them are concerned, till date.

With all this absurdity floating in the air within the vicinity of consciousness studies, sometimes, to shrug off all the spinoff headaches, I am tempted to think that, maybe *inscrutability*, perhaps essential of consciousness. However, even if so, I cannot rest in peace opining the above. The *M-PC challenge* is going to bring on me the burden of facing the same harrowing challenge that it has promised to gift to all the consciousness theories.

Chapter Four

The Question of Solvability of HPC: Does the Solvability of M-PC Imply the Solvability of HPC?

So far, we have discussed a spate of important things, related to the nature (based on our immediate experience and awareness of consciousness) and the problem (the identification of which is, in turn, based on the accepted nature of consciousness) of consciousness, starting from *what should be the appropriate question to start off our (metaphysical) project of consciousness with, to a riveting elucidation of the problem of 'why we think that there is a hard problem of consciousness'*, namely, the *meta-problem of consciousness, which opens the door of research on the problem of consciousness to everyone interested*. This liberal gesture (its way of formulating a problem of consciousness, which is same for all, based on the hard problem of consciousness) of the M-PC, in a way tries to evacuate the phenomenon of consciousness from being stuck in an impasse (albeit, in a theoretical sense). But, what if, even the M-PC is solved? Does the solution to the M-PC in any way mean the solution to the HPC as well? Is the solution to the M-PC capable of solving the *hard problem of conscious experience* away? Can the advent of a solution to the M-PC bring with it a solution to the HPC too? These are the philosophical questions, which now seem to be

cropping up and which deserve to be answered. And in order to answer these questions, we need to understand the relation between HPC and the M-PC, and doing what, in turn, requires remembering the essential features of both. Both the HPC and the M-PC have been discussed extensively in the earlier chapters, but for the sake of our present discussion, let us try to focus on the important facts about both.

M-PC in a nutshell

There are few things about the M-PC that we should keep in mind, before we get into the discussion of whether it is reasonable to draw conclusions about the solvability of the HPC based on the solvability of the M-PC. Let us try to look at them.

First of all, the *M-PC is not an elucidation/elucidative formulation of the HPC*. If we remember the formulation of the M-PC as Chalmers did in his article¹, then we can see that, there, he has adumbrated the M-PC as a problem about the HPC. To be clear, the M-PC is the problem of why we think there is HPC. HPC, on the other hand, is simply speaking, the problem of accounting for the

¹ Chalmers, “The Meta-Problem of Consciousness,” 6-61.

experientiality/subjectivity/perspectivalness/phenomenality/qualia/felt aspect (of consciousness), which seems to be an integral and constituting element of consciousness or conscious experience. So, it is very clear that, the HPC and the M-PC are quite different problems and thus it is expected that, *neither they should be mistaken with each other, nor should any one of them be understood as the elucidation of the other*. Of course, it is true that, *they have close ties with each other*, but such a relation of *having close ties or association* should not be understood as being that of *ontological equivalence*.

Second of all, M-PC is a problem of coming up with a *functional explanation of us having the hard problem intuitions*, due to which we have difficulty in accepting the ‘*anti-experiential accounts of consciousness*’². To be clear, solving this requires to identify the right sort of underlying functions and activities (neuronal) taking place in brain, which are expected to give rise to such problem intuitions in us, and thus, *this M-PC, in principle, is one of the soft problems (SPC)*.

Third of all, *M-PC, being an SPC, is solvable in principle*.

² These are the accounts of consciousness, which have no regard for the experiential feature of consciousness and thus do not explain or try to explain this feature or aspect of consciousness. This sort of theories has been regarded by me as the opponent theories/position with respect to my thesis, as my thesis, based on immediate association with consciousness/consciousness, proposes that, experientiality is the most important constituting element of consciousness, and thus no theory of consciousness can finesse the questions of experientiality. According to my thesis, if a theory is to explain consciousness, then it definitely has to explain experientiality.

The continuous progress of burgeoning neuroscience/brain science, makes it quite conspicuous that, having a functional exposition of the states of brain, which are expected to yield consciousness/conscious states is possible in reality. Now, as it is the case, that the solvability of the M-PC depends on giving a functional explanation of certain brain states, and as it is possible to give functional explanation of brain states per se, thus, in principle, the M-PC is solvable, no matter whether or not, at present, we are equipped with right apparatus to get this problem solved.

HPC in a nutshell

The hard problem of consciousness or HPC is the problem of explaining the experiential aspect of consciousness. Why it is that, to understand consciousness, having some experiential/subjective perspective is crucial. We have come to know from the earlier discussions in the previous chapters, that *consciousness is essentially conscious experience*. If there is anything of consciousness, that we are so certainly aware of, and without which we cannot conceive (of) consciousness, then that is its (consciousness) experientiality. This experientiality of consciousness could be understood in various different ways or as different concepts, such as *phenomenal*

properties, felt aspect, qualia, subjectivity etc. But all of them refer to the broader concept of experientiality, which subsumes every single of them as various but mutually complementary aspects/sides of it.

The HPC is regarded as hard (to solve), since we have no good clue about how can something (that is, consciousness), which is essentially *anti-objective*, be studied and construed from any *objective standpoint*, using objective apparatus. In principle, this HPC appears to be not allowing to be solved. If having an experiential or subjective perspective is essential for understanding consciousness, then no matter how many (objective) things we know (from third person point of view) about consciousness, none of them can suffice to what consciousness essentially is. The objective knowledge or the objective facts about consciousness might be important for us to understand consciousness, but that is not all about consciousness to be known. Even if we regard the objective facts about consciousness, there seems to be present another (important) feature or aspect of consciousness, which contributes largely to the constitution of consciousness. And that is the experientiality of consciousness. This experientiality aspect, however, seems to be more important as a constituent of consciousness, than anything else. *This experientiality is so important an element of consciousness that, if we fail to understand it, we miss the crux of consciousness.*

The HPC, in another way, if discussed with direct reference to neurophysiology and neurophysiological findings about the function of brain

and the kinds of activities that take place in there (which are expected to be the basis of consciousness/conscious states), then it (HPC) can be understood as *the problem of reconciling the objective neuronal states with subjective conscious states of sentience, or as the problem of knowing how can a privately observable subjective phenomenon emerge from a publicly observable objective phenomenon*. So, in this sense, it (HPC) is not a mere problem of finding out the neuronal basis (of consciousness), but rather a problem beyond that (as stated above), and which cannot be solved the way the problem of finding neuronal correlates (that is, the SPC) can be.

So the important facts about the HPC, that we need to keep in mind for the present purpose are

Firstly, the *HPC is the problem of explaining experience*, which is essentially a subjective, private phenomenon.

Secondly, *the HPC and the SPC are not the same*, as they have different concerns (about consciousness) or different approaches towards consciousness or studying consciousness. Where SPC is concerned about consciousness in terms of finding the objective neuronal states, which are correlational with various conscious states; the HPC is concerned about explaining the subjective experiences, what the conscious states seem to be essentially.

Thirdly, as contrasted with the SPC, *the HPC seems to be unsolvable*. Solving the SPC requires only the identification of the neuronal correlates and doing that has come out to be a feasible job. But, on the other hand it is quite hard to conceive how the pure subjective phenomenon of consciousness can ever be studied from any objective standpoint. It (experience) is not even something that we can explain verbally³. It is something which can be experienced only, or the real nature of which can be grasped only through having the experience. The moment we talk about them, a lot of the (experiential) details are lost in the descriptions. This is, however, neither because of us being oblivious nor due to the inability of languages, that we fail to describe them with maximum details. But, metaphysically, it is not possible for the experiences to be described satisfactorily. The descriptions, no matter how lurid they are, can never provide us the immediate or direct experience of the situation being described. All that the descriptions are capable of providing is just description, and which is clearly not experience.

Fourthly, *the solution to the SPC, does not actually solve the HPC*. And thus looking at the solvability nature of the SPC, we should not come to the conclusion that the HPC is solvable too.

³ Although the verbal reports seem to be only objective data, which we can consider for knowing about the conscious experience of others.

The relation between the HPC and the M-PC and the question of solvability

Now that I have jotted down the cruxes of both the HPC and the M-PC, let us try to discuss a bit about how they are related to each other, and which in return will help us to know whether or not from the solvability of the M-PC, we can draw conclusion about the solvability of the HPC, and at the same time whether the HPC by its very nature, a solvable problem or not.

We have come to know that, the M-PC is a problem about the HPC. Now, from this fact only, even without going deeper into the analysis of the M-PC (which has already been done somewhere in the earlier section) it seems clearly, that, the M-PC is not the same as that of the HPC. It is true that, the M-PC being a problem about the HPC, has close ties with the HPC. But, having close ties (with something) does not in any remote way mean being one and the same thing (as that thing, with which one has close ties).

This abovementioned fact about the M-PC also discards the possibility of M-PC being an elucidation of the HPC. Had that been the case, we could have thought of the M-PC as being nothing else but the HPC itself, albeit, a novel version which is much simpler in formulation than the original or classic formulation of the HPC.

Apart from this, the M-PC and the HPC differ from each other in terms of their nature as problems of consciousness. Where the M-PC is, in principle, a soft problem of consciousness (SPC); the very name of the HPC suggests that, it is not. The nature of the M-PC being an SPC is actually dependent on its possibility of getting solved. The solvability of the M-PC, on the other hand, is dependent on the kind of explanation that it requires to be solved, and whether it is feasible to come up with such explanations. Now, as discussed earlier, to solve the M-PC, what is required, is nothing but functional neurological explanation of brain states and such explanations are possible (both practically and metaphysically) to provide. That is the reason why M-PC is regarded as an SPC.

But, unlike the M-PC, the HPC is not an SPC. As said earlier, the HPC is the problem of explaining experience, having problematic characteristics, such as, subjectivity etc. which make it (experience/conscious experience) next to impossible to account for. *Even if we keep the question of the availability of any solution aside, The HPC is or would still remain a problem hard to solve, largely because, we don't even have any clue about how possibly it could be solved or the kind of explanation we require to have it (the HPC) solved.* In the case of the SPC, even if for the sake of argument, we accept that, we don't have any explanation available at present, but still it would be a soft problem, as we

are certain about at least what kind of explanation we need to get it solved, and which is moreover possible for us to get, at least in theory.

We have already got into the discussion of the solvability of the HPC, while discussing about the nature of the HPC and M-PC with reference to the distinction of hard and soft problems of consciousness done by Chalmers. This very identification of the nature of the problems of consciousness as being either soft or hard, is dependent on their natures of being either solvable or not, and thus, while discussing about them being either soft or hard, we had to get into the discussion of their solvability nature.

Now this very difference between the natures of the M-PC and the HPC, respectively as soft and hard, says all that can be said about the solvability of both, as it has been discussed earlier. So, to repeat, where the M-PC is solvable in nature, the HPC is not, and this could be understood simply by looking at their nature as being soft and hard respectively.

Though the very nature of the HPC as being *a problem hard to solve*, sort of ends all the discussions on or about its solvability at once, there are claims echoing within the domain of consciousness studies, that the solution to the M-PC, could solve the HPC.⁴ now, theoretically, this could have been possible, if at least any one of the below were the case

- (i) The M-PC is an elucidation or explanation of the HPC.

⁴ Chalmers, "The Meta-Problem of Consciousness," 35.

- (ii) The M-PC having same nature as a problem of consciousness as that of the HPC.
- (iii) The M-PC is essentially one and the same as the HPC.

The last point actually sums up the earlier two, as it talks about ontological equivalence. Now, as we can see from the discussions done in the above passages, that, none of them is actually the case in reality, thus, it would be extremely fatuous if we, from the solvability of the M-PC, try to deduce the solvability of the HPC. The HPC, by its very nature as a hard problem, is unsolvable and thus, from nowhere can its solvability be deduced.

But of course, the solution to the M-PC is expected to shed enormous amount of light on the HPC, in virtue of being solution to a problem about the HPC, even if it is impossible for it to solve away the HPC. And in that respect, the M-PC is worth working on as a problem of consciousness. The solution to the M-PC might at most provide us with some of the most important clues, which would in turn can help us to get nearer to the explanation/solution to the HPC.

On the necessity of returning to the HPC

It is quite reasonable to ask that, why straight from the discussion of the M-PC in the last chapter, I got back to the discussion of the HPC, especially with regard to its solvability, in this chapter. Having said before in the first chapter, that the real perplexing problem of consciousness is the problem of *experientiality of consciousness*, a.k.a., the HPC; I cannot find anything of more philosophical importance about consciousness to concentrate on and ponder over. Such complex is the nature of the HPC, that no third person, objective explanation seems to be anywhere nearer to the solution of it. All of them seems to be missing the main point while trying to account for the HPC, or the phenomenon central to the HPC, that is, the experientiality.

From the discussion towards the end of the first chapter, it is quite clear that, how important experientialty as an aspect/feature of consciousness is, that it seems to be at the heart of consciousness and that it is impossible to conceive of consciousness without it. Now, even if we don't consider it (experientiality) as being the most important aspect/feature of consciousness, and regard it as just one of the aspects/features, still, the theories that attempt to explain consciousness, must explain experientiality too, for it is one of the elements of consciousness, which are constituents of it (consciousness) as a

phenomenon. The explanations of consciousness cannot be considered as fully explanatory of consciousness, unless they account for this experientiality. And there lies the importance of getting back to the discussion on the HPC, at the core of which there is this experientiality phenomenon, or which is a problem about this experientiality.

HPC is the core and the main philosophical problem of consciousness, which concerns about the nature of consciousness, having knowledge of which will eventually lead us to the solution to all the problems of consciousness. The HPC is based on our immediate experience/awareness of consciousness, and whatever seems to be essential to consciousness based on that.

The *qualia*, the *phenomenality* or *phenomenal properties*, the *felt aspects* (of consciousness) are not different phenomena, but one and the same thing as that of the experientiality feature. The analytic way of analysing the things makes these phenomena (with different names and conceptualities) appear as if they are different from each other. But in reality they are parts of the same entity or rather, to be more true and right while saying, they are just the same thing. The analytic (philosophy) way of philosophizing requires us to move down the essential scale, in search of more and more fundamental phenomenon, which is expected to form the

heart of the phenomenon at hand and be responsible for what the phenomenon at hand is, whatever it is.⁵

The unity of These phenomena of phenomenality, qualia, felt aspect, subjectivity, perspectivalness is derived from their relation of intimacy. They are so intimately connected/related with each other, that the discussion of one will inevitably give rise to the discussion of others, and that, to make complete sense of one, understanding the others is necessary. Once we go beyond the initial stages of understanding, where these conceptual diversities exist, we get to know them as being one and same thing, although having different conceptual senses.

So, the phenomenon of experience being central to or simply being an ordinary aspect of consciousness, deserves to be explained by every theory that explains or tries to explain consciousness; and the HPC, being a problem of or about this experientiality of consciousness, or a problem which pays attention to this experientiality of consciousness, is that problem of consciousness, which is to be given maximum importance. That is simply the reason for which it is reasonable to again and again get back to the discussion of HPC, until a fully satisfactory explanation of the experientiality of consciousness comes into being.

⁵ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 5.

Considering consciousness, reconsidering neuroscience

This is the high time to understand the importance of consciousness (in the consciousness studies) than anything else whatsoever. Whoever wants to understand consciousness must understand, that consciousness as the central matter of our study, deserves justice in terms of being understood as what it actually is and not as how we want to describe it as. Due to our inability to grasp it the way it is, with our available physical or intellectual or linguistic apparatus, we must not hurry to reach any solution or conclusion, either by snubbing out its possibility, or by trying to reduce it to something else that it is most probably not.

Among the various kinds of anti-experiential accounts of consciousness, that we have, for example, philosophical behaviourism, functionalism, etc., the neurophysiological or neuroscientific reductive account of consciousness seems to be the strongest one. It is so strong as a theory of consciousness, that most of the soft problems of consciousness are dealt with by it and that too so incredibly. Besides having the hefty thesis of *brain-consciousness identity*, it has got some important empirical evidences to support its thesis. Moreover, the neuroscience, based on its empirical discoveries, enjoys more predictive and explanatory power about

consciousness or conscious states than any other discipline. But despite a lot of scintillating facts about the neuroscience and its mind-boggling discoveries about the brain states, there are some facts that we should consider before accepting the credibility of neuroscientific findings about conscious states and consequently, its paramount position in the domain of consciousness studies.

The first one to consider is the method used by the neuroscientists. As said earlier, the method of the neuroscience is broadly speaking, an objective method, which involves mediate strategies like various brain imagery techniques to observe and study the brain activities (from third person perspective), such as Computerised Tomography (CT) Scan, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), etc. or immediate strategies like, open brain study of the various parts of the brain (from the third person perspective). Now using both the strategies, the neuroscientists, try to look for neuronal correlates of conscious states. But the important point to note here is that, *though, according to the blue print of their plan, they are to find the correlations between conscious states and brain states, all they have at their hand to observe and study is the brain states or neuronal states of brain only.* To take the account of the conscious states, however, they have to depend on the verbal reports of the subjects, and that is an important evidence of the subjectivity of the conscious states. Taking the verbal reports of the subjects in a way considers the perspectivalness of consciousness seriously.

So, all that we have come to know about or can know about consciousness, from the neuroscientific researches, at least for the time being, is that, there are co-relations between physical states of brain and conscious experiential states, and nothing else. Now, on the basis of these (mere) co-relations, the neuroscientists are proposing a thesis, which reduces or tries to reduce the phenomenon of consciousness into neuronal states of brain. But, based on the correlations, why only to think that the physical states of brain give rise to consciousness or conscious experiential states, and not the other way round? *If there is co-relation between A and B, then the possible relationship between these two can be envisaged in three different ways, that are, (i) that A causes B or that, B is caused by A; (ii) that B causes A or that, A is caused by B; and (iii) that neither of them causes the other, or that they are not causally related to each other and that, they both are caused by something else or are co-effects of some cause/s.* Now, neuroscience, among these three possible ways in which brain states and conscious experiential states can be related to each other, chooses the one, in which brain states are accepted as causally efficacious for the generation of the conscious experiential states and the conscious experiential states are accepted as causally dependent on the physical states of brain, based on the mere fact that they are co-related, a fact, from which, the claim they are making, does not seem to be following necessarily. This type of views of consciousness, where only the physical phenomena are given importance and accepted as fundamental are generally called ‘physicalism’, and it is quite

clear to us that, there involves a form of dogmatism. On the other hand, even if the conscious experiential states are accepted as fundamental and efficacious in determining or regulating the physical states of brain, just on the basis of mere co-relations between them, then, that view too would be as much dogmatic as the view called 'physicalism' is. So, instead of reaching any conclusion so hastily regarding consciousness, on the basis of the correlations between the two, we should better spend some more time on observing both the states (although unlike the brain states, the conscious states are not there to be publicly observed) and on earmarking their peculiarities.

So, from the discussion above, we can say that, neuroscience, in order to claim that, the conscious experiential states are reducible to the neuronal states of the brain, must prove that, the correlations between the conscious states and neuronal states are no mere correlations, but actually causal relations.⁶ However, for a thesis, which intends to show the causal dependence of the conscious states on the neuronal states, must also prove that, the causal relation between the two holds in a specific way, that is, from the side of the neuronal states to the conscious states, and neither the other way round (which would prove the dependence of the neuronal states on the conscious states) nor both ways (which would lead us to some sort of causal

⁶ Ibid., 196.

interactionism between the two, giving equal importance and emphasis on both the phenomena).

The nature of causal relations and dependencies are such that, if two phenomena are related with each other causally, or that, if one phenomenon is casually dependent on another, then the *dependent one* can be fully explained by the one, on which it is dependent. And now if there holds a causal relation between the neuronal states and the conscious states and that too from the side of the former to the latter, then the neuronal states must be fully explanatory of the conscious states, leaving nothing of conscious states unexplained. That is to say, that even the experientiality of consciousness is to be explained by the neuronal states if the neuronal states are to be called the causes of the conscious experiential states. However, as a matter of fact, neuroscientific approaches towards studying or construing the nature of consciousness seem to be no way capable of even grasping such an aspect or side of consciousness, and thus the question of such explanations explaining the experientiality does not even arise.

The correlations between the neuronal states and the conscious experiential states should better be regarded as the starting point of the scientific study of consciousness and not the ultimate discovery or findings in this regard. The discovery of such correlations could be viewed as the omen for the discovery of a causal relation between the concerned two in near or far future.

Moreover, though the neuroscientific accounts of consciousness are so much informative about various brain states and how they work or function, they hardly say anything about the experientiality aspect of consciousness, as said earlier. As we have discussed earlier that the real hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience or conscious experience, but much to our disappointment, despite being a dazzling theory of consciousness, the neuroscience fails to explain the problem of experience. Neuroscience, tells us that, consciousness, somehow emerges from the states of brain, but, it fails to tell us how and why, consciousness emerges from the states of brain. It somehow finesses the hard question (with specific reference to its position) of why the brain states are responsible for giving rise to consciousness or what makes them (brain states) responsible for the rise of consciousness or the way consciousness is.

To do away with the hard problem of consciousness or answering the questions related to the hard problem of consciousness, some neuroscientists have talked about conscious brain states and unconscious brain states, such as Bernard Baars.⁷ According to his view, some physical processes of brain are conscious while some are not. But, again, this is nothing but another pseudo-explanation of consciousness, which too, like the other scientific explanations, fails to answer satisfactorily why conscious brain states are conscious and why other brain states with similar sort of configuration and

⁷ Blackmore, *Conversations*, 13.

processes going on within them are not conscious.⁸ In fact, all who have been able to understand the exact problem of consciousness, may be able to realise that, actually no scientific theory of consciousness explains the phenomenon of consciousness. As Chalmers is of the opinion that, the so called scientific explanations do not explain the phenomena of consciousness but only talks about the co-relations between various conscious experiential states and the various physical processes of brain.⁹

Apart from the problems related to the correlations, the neuroscience has got a practical (methodological) problem.¹⁰ It is quite hard to think that, how the microelements of the brain can be studied practically without damaging the microlevel structure or the neurons, or without killing the organism. Now, if that is a practical constraint, then while working on the microelements of the brain, we seem to be affecting the neuronal states and how the neurons behave. And no matter whether our intrusion into the neuronal matrix have positive or negative repercussion on the neuronal states, it seems so clear that, it is an impediment on our way to understand or study the neuronal states in their pure natural states, without affecting them.

According to Searle, another problem with the neuroscience is that, in neuroscience, there is no unifying theoretical principle, in terms of which

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 4.

or using which the neuronal states of brain can universally be explained.¹¹ Though it is true that, neuroscience as an academic enterprise is brimming with a lot of information about brain or neurons or neuronal states and about their functions, but still due to the unavailability of a fundamental explanatory (of the matters at hand, i.e., consciousness) principle, neuroscience is unable to explain how such neuronal activities or whatever goes on at the micro-level of brain are responsible for the way consciousness is.

Neuroscience is a variety of materialism, in the sense that, it talks about the fundamentality of matter in the understanding of consciousness. According to the thesis of materialism (in the context of the discussion on consciousness), the phenomenon of consciousness can be fully explained with reference to or in terms of matter. And in neuroscience, this fundamental matter is neuron. Neurons are the fundamental matter which are accepted as being responsible for conscious experience or the phenomenon of consciousness. But the hard and the fundamental questions are *why only the neuron cells of brain are responsible for consciousness; and not the other cells that make up the other parts of our body, why always the neurons have been associated with consciousness and not the other cells; what is so special about neurons*. Even within the category of brain cells (to which the neuronal cells belong or fall under), not all cells are accepted as being responsible for

¹¹ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 198.

consciousness, e.g., *Glial cells*. Glial cells are the non-neuronal cells which are expected to be one of the important components that help the neurons function properly.¹² But as said earlier, the glial cells are never held responsible for the rise of consciousness or are never associated with consciousness the way neurons have been.

If matter (biological) is responsible for (the rise of) consciousness, then why not every possible kinds of matters are responsible for (or for giving rise to consciousness) it (consciousness). Or more radically speaking, if matter itself is conscious(ness), then why not all matters are conscious(ness). These are the kinds of questions that neurophysiology or neuroscience has to answer if it has to explain consciousness or to unravel the mystery of consciousness.

Searle uses an analogy to edify us about how otiose the findings and the study of the neuronal correlates may turn out to be in our project of explaining consciousness. In neuroscience, the micro-level elements of brain called ‘neuron(s)’ are studied to explain consciousness, and in Searle’s opinion, this strategy to understand/explain consciousness can be as hopeless as that of understanding a car engine at the level of the molecules of the metal in the cylinder block simply speaking, by studying the molecules of the metal of which the engine is made.¹³

¹² "What are glia?," Queensland Brain Institute, Last modified May 1, 2019, <https://qbi.uq.edu.au/brain-basics/brain/brain-physiology/what-are-glia>

¹³ Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, 198.

However, it seems to me that, body, no matter whether is reduced to the firings of neurons in brain or not, is an important element which contributes to the constitution of consciousness and the way consciousness is/feels, and I am not going to deny it, since there seems to be no ground to do so. Taking the experientiality aspect of consciousness does not require one to abandon or jettison the bodily aspect of it (consciousness) or to regard it (bodily aspect of consciousness) as less important than the experientiality aspect.

Being a hardcore Cartesian with regard to the nature of consciousness, seems to be philosophically passé these days. If it is true that we are essentially conscious, then it too is true that we are bodily beings and body too is essential for conscious experience. Even if experientiality is accepted as the most important aspect of consciousness, still based on our biological understanding of experience, we can say that, without the body, the possibility of experience would be in question. The body seems to be inseparably associated with conscious experience. And this fact about body in connection with consciousness must be taken into account to have a better understanding of or explain consciousness. Of course, at the end of the day we will have to answer that what kind of role body plays in the constitution of consciousness and how. But at this juncture we can safely claim that

neuroscientific reduction with regard to consciousness is as passé as Cartesian dualism¹⁴.

By now, I guess it is quite clear that at what stage of its development, the discipline of neuroscience is and based on that how far it can help us to understand the phenomenon of consciousness. Pointing out the above drawbacks of neuroscience should not in any remote way be seen or understood as a deliberate act to disregard and demean neuroscience as an academic or scientific or medical field of inquiry. Rather such an undertaking is an honest attempt to analyse the metaphysical and methodological underpinnings of neuroscientific reductionism to show that, neuroscience is not equipped to deal with the hard problem of consciousness. Despite having mentioned the drawbacks of neuroscience in the above passages I would not indulge into any form of dogmatism by saying that, neuroscience has nothing to contribute to the *big-picture understanding of consciousness*. For the time being, based on our immediate experiences of the phenomenon of consciousness and using all the intellectual, linguistic and scientific apparatus, we cannot associate the neuronal correlates of brain with consciousness as inseparably as we can relate our immediate awareness of it to it. But, based on this inability of us, we cannot make this ponderous claim that, the neuroscientific findings are worthless information for the understanding of consciousness. Even after many years of research and

¹⁴ The one that talks about the strong dichotomy between mind/consciousness and body/matter and faces tremendous problem while explaining their interaction.

contemplation on the phenomenon of consciousness, we have not yet been able to find our initial toehold and thus we are in no position to even say that what sort of information is really important and what is not for understanding consciousness. So it is better for us to take every single of the available options into consideration, which could possibly help us to understand consciousness even if not individually but together.

The same I want the neuroscientists' approach to be, that, they should have regard for and should take into consideration the philosophical and other theoretical findings about consciousness, in order to construct a big-picture understanding and a better explanation of the phenomenon of consciousness.

It seems that, the nature of consciousness, in its hardest essence, spills over and outside the technologies of science. Hence, there seems to be a mismatch, or at least, an inadequate match between the phenomenon under investigation, that is, consciousness, and the methods of investigation. Now, to get over this impasse, science has two options. Either, science has to expand its methodologies beyond what it already has, or has to give up its investigation about consciousness to the other disciplines of inquiry.

Maybe science in general, as a discipline has already come to the realization of its inability to answer the real hard and the fundamental questions about consciousness and thus has started incorporating various approaches and methodologies from outside the domain of science for the

sake of understanding consciousness better than ever. The best evidence of this radical change in the approach of science towards understanding consciousness, is perhaps *The Science of Consciousness (TSC)*, formerly *Towards a Science of Consciousness* conferences, which aim to bring all the available methodologies to understand consciousness together. TSC conferences are the Center for Consciousness Studies, University of Arizona organised international academic conferences, which have been held twice every year at various locations around the world since 1994. My claim regarding TSCs reflecting this change of attitude of science towards understanding consciousness as a phenomenon can be understood if we look at the introductory blurb to the TSC conference 2019, which is available on its website. It says,

TSC (The Science of Consciousness) conferences continue to bring together various perspectives, orientations, and methodologies within the study of consciousness. These include not only academic subjects within the sciences and humanities, but also contemplative and experiential traditions, culture and the arts. TSC aims to integrate viewpoints and bridge gaps, appreciates constructive controversy, and pursues the spirit of genuine dialogue.¹⁵

¹⁵ "Home," The Science of Consciousness Interlaken 2019, Last modified May 1, 2019, <https://www.tsc2019-interlaken.ch/>

The perks of embracing a phenomenological attitude

In every human enquiry, the central position is occupied by the phenomena (things per se), being the object of every enquiry. Phenomena are central to the enquiries in the sense that, the enquiries are about the phenomena and will stop once the nature of the phenomena are known.

Now, though in a very ordinary sense, the phenomena are central to every human enquiry, be it a very mundane one or hardcore scholarly, in a very specific and special sense, it is particularly central (and only to) to and of crucial importance to a system or school of philosophy, called 'phenomenology'. The very name of this school of philosophy is suggestive of its intimate association or relation with the phenomena or the concept of the same.

Thus, it is expected that, as a discipline with special closeness and regard for the phenomena, it has got some special things to say about the phenomena, without being specific to any particular. Phenomena, as it has been said, are central to phenomenology in a very specific sense, and thus to proceed with a scrupulous analysis here, one of the important tasks would be to know that specific sense in which it has been understood in the discipline. So starting with the discussion of the specific sense of 'phenomena' in which it has been understood in phenomenology, I will get into the discussion of phenomenology, its concern and method and eventually try to see if it all

there is any benefit of having a phenomenological attitude towards understanding the phenomenon of consciousness.

In ordinary parlance, the word 'phenomena' (singular: phenomenon) is understood as everything under the sun, but not merely that (even). That is to say, by this word, we, in a very general way, understand everything, we are capable of knowing or not so, natural or unnatural, existent or nonexistent and so forth. For example, for the sake of relegating happenings like tsunami, earthquake, volcano eruption, photosynthesis, digestion, downturn of share market, mirage, ghost sighting, birds making their nests, the President of the U.S.A. being dethroned, states declaring wars, citizens showing protest against the backdrop of state introducing some anti-minority laws, into one kind, we use the word 'phenomena'.

But if we are required to be more specific (than the above classification) while classifying the mentioned happenings, then among the items mentioned above, some of them, we are going to call 'natural phenomena', such as, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, photosynthesis, digestion, mirage, birds making their nests (although tsunamis, earthquakes may be caused by human activities and in such cases, it would be inappropriate to call them 'natural phenomena', as far our heuristic understanding of the concept of nature is concerned); whereas some other are going to be called 'unnatural or human phenomena', such as, downturn of share market, the President of the U.S.A. being dethroned, states

declaring wars, citizens showing protest against the backdrop of state introducing some anti-minority laws. But, that's not all. Among both the categories of natural and unnatural phenomena, the things could be classified into more specific categories, e.g., tsunami is a pelagic phenomenon, earthquake is a terrestrial phenomenon, photosynthesis is a botanical phenomenon; on the other hand, the downturn of share market is an economic phenomenon, the President of the U.S.A. being dethroned is a political phenomenon etc. There could be even finer classification of the mentioned phenomena based on minute differences among them.

On the other hand, as far as the etymology of the word 'phenomenon' (English) is concerned, it has its root in the Greek word 'phainomenon', which means appearance.¹⁶ By appearance of the things, is meant, the way they are experienced by subjects or the ways things appear to us in our experience.

Now, the appearance of the things might occasionally be illusory. For example, in the middle of a desert with the sun glowing brightly above in the sky, a scorching surface of sand dunes can appear to be an oasis from a distance, to a famished and thirsty person in his or her experience. And similarly, in philosophy the word 'appearance' is understood as being the phony side of things by philosophers by and large, as contrasted with the real

¹⁶ Smith, Davidwoodruff, "Phenomenology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>

nature of the things. However, in philosophy, the delusional nature of phenomena is not treated as transient, but as ontologically built into it. So, unlike the case of the mirage, which is an instance of a fleeting observation or experience or occurrence, the phenomena/appearance of the things, in philosophy, are treated as being always delusional and as that which veils the reality to us. The background (metaphysical) assumption that goads the philosophers to have such a thought is that, there is a distinction between the reality and the way it is represented to us or given in our experience.

In the strictest sense, however, if we at all can know anything, then that is nothing but the appearance of the things or how they appear to us in our experience, no matter whether they are deceitful in nature or not, in revealing reality.

In this connection, let us reminisce the distinction between the *mental phenomena* and the *physical phenomena* as being done by Franz Brentano¹⁷, which I think will be helpful for us to understand the matter at hand more conspicuously. Brentano, has made an important distinction between the mental phenomena and the physical phenomena by bringing in the concepts of *intentionality*¹⁸, *intentional inexistence*¹⁹, and *extension*²⁰. Although, among these three, the third concept, that is, of extensionality, has long been

¹⁷ Franz Brentano, "The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena," in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2002), 479.

¹⁸ Ibid, 481.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 480.

there even before the appearance of Brentano in the field, the earliest reference of which in modern philosophy can be found in Descartes²¹. Intentionality is that feature of consciousness or mind, using which or due to which, it gets directed towards the objects. Conscious states are always about something, and for being about things, it takes help of its intentionality feature. As contrasted with physical phenomena, the essential feature of which is extension, Brentano has accepted the *intentionality* (feature) as one of the important features of *Consciousness or mental phenomena*. The physical phenomena are the things or objects that are extended out there and are independently existent (in the sense that, for their existence, they are not in any way dependent on the subjects). On the other hand, the mental phenomena are the representations of the physical phenomena that exist within ourselves. Unlike the physical phenomena, the mental phenomena have no extension. The mental phenomena are the exclusive object of our experience.²² Mental phenomena are regarded as the exclusive object of (our) experience, since in the strictest sense, it is only the mental phenomena, which we can experience. Now, in the light of our last discussion on phenomena/appearance-reality dichotomy, the physical phenomena can be understood as the reality, which exists independently of us; and the mental phenomena can be understood as the phenomena/appearance (of things).

²¹ René Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. J. Cottingham (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²² Brentano, "The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena," 482.

Though ordinarily in philosophy, ‘appearance’ is understood as being delusional, that which veils reality, here I am not concerned with the metaphysical dichotomy of appearance and reality. But, all that I am purported to say here is that, phenomena are simply the appearance of the things, in the sense of being the experience of the things as contrasted with the things experienced. And also that, in the strict sense, it is only the phenomena, that we can immediately or directly know. Whether the phenomena are delusional (ontologically) in nature or not so, that is altogether a different concern. But, as far as our intuitive and logical understanding of phenomena is concerned, based on that, I have tried to say a few things about them.

Now, in the field of phenomenology, ‘phenomena’ is understood as the conscious experience, with which we are most intimately connected. The phenomena, according to the experts in the field, are the exclusive object of our experience.

Now, Phenomenology as a discipline, can be understood as the academic or intellectual field, the main concern of which is to study the *phenomena* or the appearance of things.²³ Experience is one of the important or may be the most important thing in or aspect of our lives. Without experience, we seem to be having a lot of difficulty to conceive of us as

²³ Smith, Davidwoodruff, “Phenomenology”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>

conscious experiencers. It is the experiences that make us what we are. Experience is thus, undoubtedly central to our beings or existence.

There is one important fact about experience that we should know before plunging into the discussion of the discipline of phenomenology. It is that, Experiences always have a subjective aspect. There cannot be any experience which is independent of conscious subjects. Experiences are always the experience of some subject and thus the subjectivity (the typical quality of being of a particular subject) of conscious experiences is essential of experience.

In philosophy, albeit, not unanimously, *consciousness*, *experience*, *mental phenomena* are treated as being synonymous. It is because, there cannot be any experience, which is not conscious. Experiences, by their very nature, are conscious. And if they are not conscious, they are not experience at all and also the vice versa.

Now, in phenomenology, this subjective experiences (the way in which experiences are being experienced by subjects from the first-person perspective) are analyzed to know the structure of experience or consciousness.

There could be found at least three distinct ways or methods using which the phenomena are being tried to be analyzed by classical

phenomenologists²⁴, which are, (i) by describing our lived experiences²⁵; (ii) by interpreting our experiences by relating them to the relevant features of particular contexts²⁶; and lastly (iii) by simple analysis of the experiences²⁷. But, despite the differences in the peculiarity of the methods, the essential part of all the methods is analysis of subjective experience.

Now, there could be attacks against the discipline of phenomenology by bringing in the concept of phenomenological fallacy and the accusation of committing it. Phenomenological fallacy is the mistake of accepting the experienced features of something to be its real features. This fallacy is backed up by the metaphysical assumption that, that there is a distinction between appearance and reality and that, in experience, we cannot get hold of reality or the real nature of the things. For example, the phenomenon of heat is ontologically completely different from the way it is experienced by us. Heat, as a phenomenon, is experienced by us as being hot. In our experiences we cannot know the real nature of the phenomenon of heat, which is the high average molecular kinetic energy²⁸, as proved in the discipline of physics. Similarly, to bring an inexorable blow against phenomenology, to knock it down, using the same argument it can be said that, in experience we cannot grasp the real nature of anything and thus, not

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 26.

of consciousness either. And thus, no matter how hard one tries to analyse the conscious experiences, the real structure of conscious experience cannot be grasped through such a process.

Now, to counter such an argument against phenomenology, one could adduce the experiential argument, although, such an argument is not going to be treated as a very strong one. An experiential argument says that, something, suppose A is experienced as something, suppose B, because (of the fact that) in reality A is B. According to this argument, if A were not B, then it would not have been possible for us to experience A as B. But, so feeble as an argument it is that, refuting it is a doddle. Bringing in the counteractive cases like that of mirage, this argument could so easily be refuted. In delusional cases of mirage, the vista of a distant arid landscape appears as oasis. But our experience of that distant landscape as oasis does not make it an oasis in reality or to be more correct, it is not because of the fact that, the distant landscape is really an oasis, for which we experience (in such cases) them as being oasis. So, the experiences of objects not always reveal to us the original nature of the objects and thus the credibility of the experiential argument is highly in question.

On the face of it, though the experiential argument seems to be a very weak argument, especially when it is adduced in cases of the experience of things which lies beyond the intangible domain of consciousness, it (experiential argument) is not to be rescinded so hurriedly. To counter the

argument of phenomenological fallacy, we rather should bolster the experiential argument with some clauses, containing some peculiar facts about consciousness or conscious experience. Consciousness or conscious experience, as the object of experience, is completely different from all the other objects of experience. Unlike all the other objects of experience, consciousness or conscious experience, it is nothing which lies outside consciousness or distinct from it; but very much itself. We, experience them and live through them, and also that, it is what makes us 'us'. The fact that they are being experienced, makes them experiences. Their essence as experience lies in they being experienced. And thus, though in case of other objects of experience, the subjects could be staggeringly mistaken in grasping the real nature of the objects (of experience), such cannot be in case of consciousness or conscious experience. 'being experienced' being an essential quality of conscious experiences or consciousness, the way it is experienced by subjects, as a fact, cannot be rejected, while trying to make sense of it. Earlier it had already been said that, subjectivity is an important aspect and feature of experiences, and thus how it (experience or conscious experience) appears to a subject in his or her experience is an important constituent of its being. So, taking the above peculiar facts about experience or consciousness into consideration, it seems that though in the context of the experience of objects other than (conscious) experience or consciousness, the credibility of experiential argument can be questioned; such cannot be

done in the case of the experiences, of which the objects are conscious experiences or consciousness.

In phenomenology, the subjective aspect of consciousness or conscious experience is not regarded as being illusion (as it is being done by the illusionists) or something not true of consciousness. Rather, there it is regarded as something of crucial importance and essential to the phenomenon of consciousness and is being tried to analyze with the hope of knowing the nature or structure of consciousness. So where, in many of the disciplines, the subjective aspect of consciousness is not accepted or is rejected, although it appears to be essential to consciousness; phenomenology is a step ahead than those in the run of appropriating the nature of consciousness, having accepted there being such an aspect of it (consciousness). Moreover, it also accepts this aspect of it to be an important aspect, which is somehow responsible for the way it (consciousness) is.

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on "*Phenomenon, Phenomenology and the problem of Consciousness*"

In **PATHWAYS 2019** (Time Consciousness in Husserl and Heidegger),

National Seminar cum Workshop organized by the Centre for

Phenomenological Studies at Satya Nilayam Chennai,

on 28-30 January 2019.

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