

**Memory slices by Anna Strasser**  
**DISCLAIMER: JUST MEMORIES – AIMING FOR CORRESPONDENCE  
WITH REALITY BUT CANNOT GUARANTEE IT.**

# *To be or not to be... conscious*

**Phenomenal realism & illusionism**



# KEITH FRANKISH

## *An Illusionist Manifesto*



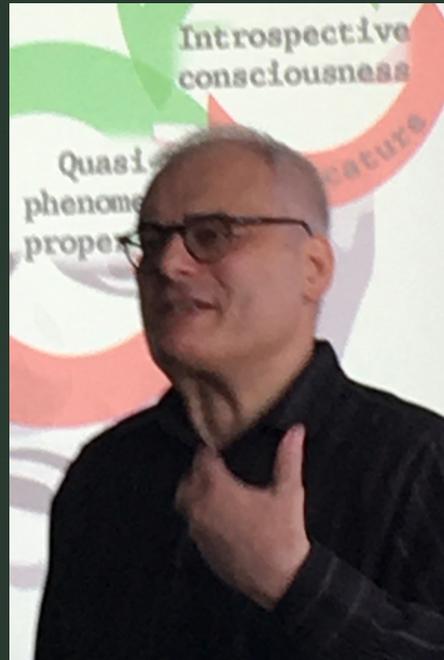
### DOs & DON'Ts

1. PHILOSOPHY
2. NEUROSCIENCE
3. ANIMALS
4. AI
5. ETHICS

**CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCES**  
NOT accompanied by an immediately apprehended mental quality  
BUT having a characteristic range of psychological effects  
including disposing us to judge that they are accompanied by an immediately apprehended mental quality

### Do

1. ... define consciousness neutrally!
2. ... deconstruct the user-illusion!
3. ... think of creatures as having different forms & grades of perceptual consciousness!
4. ... ask where a specific AI is located in the multidimensional space of forms of perceptual consciousness!
5. ... deny that there are radically private facts about experience!



### Don't

1. ... deny that consciousness exists!
2. ... search for neural correlates of phenomenal consciousness!  
... assume that consciousness is a unitary, binary feature with a unified neural basis!
3. ... assume that there is a sharp division of creatures into conscious & non-conscious ones!  
... think of consciousness as analogous to an inner light!
4. ... worry about phenomenal consciousness!  
... ask if an AI is conscious!
5. ... deny the existence of suffering!

# MICHELLE LIU

## Are laypeople phenomenal realists?



X-Phi literature suggests  
(I): *Obviousness*  
(II): *Anti-physicalist arguments*



### X-Phi

- Sytsma & Machery (2010): 'see red' (detect)
- Sytsma & Ozedemir (2019): 'experience red' (encounter)
- Díaz's (2021): 'The properties of pain are fully *explained* in terms of neural activity in the DPI.' / 'The feeling of pain *is* just neural activity in the DPI.'



### The Objection from Polysemy

**P1:** Experimental data used to draw conclusions (I) and (II).

**P2:** Some experimental questions contain polysemous words, and it is not clear that participants have homed in on the relevant senses of the words in answering these questions.

**C:** Drawing conclusions (I) and (II) on the basis of empirical data collected from participants' responses to experimental questions of the kind in (P2) is unjustified.

**BUT**

### The Objection from Ad Hoc Concepts:

**P1:** Experimental data are used to draw conclusion (II).

**P2:** Some philosophical concepts find their origins as *ad hoc* concepts, and it is not clear that participants in the experimental contexts have successfully latched onto the relevant *ad hoc* concepts in making judgements concerning these concepts.

**C:** Drawing conclusion (II) on the basis of empirical data collected from participants' judgements of the kind in (P2) is unjustified.

*arguments for illusionism fail*

# KATALIN BALOG

## Thank God qualia are real, even if God isn't



NO GENUINE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND QUALIA REALISM  
The abolition of phenomena: a voyage among the zombies

**GAP ARGUMENT**

- pointing to gaps between physical & phenomenal descriptions of the world

→ *a priori reasons against physicalism*

P = full-physical description of the world  
C = consciousness  
CPhen: using phenomenal languages  
CPhys: using physical language

**PHENOMENAL CONCEPT STRATEGY**

- isolate CPhen from CPhys concepts
- CPhen: partly constituted by tokens of phenomenal experiences

→ *mental quotation*

**OBJECTION**  
**Chalmers (2007) master argument**

- if P&C conceivable then not physically explainable
- if P&C not conceivable then C cannot explain our epistemic situation

**OBJECTION of the OBJECTION**  
**Balog**

1Phen) If P&~CPhen is conceivable, then CPhen is not physically explicable.  
1Phys) If P&~CPhys is conceivable, then CPhys is not physically explicable.  
2Phen) If P&~CPhen is not conceivable, then CPhen cannot explain our epistemic situation.  
2Phys) If P&~CPhys is not conceivable, then CPhys cannot explain our epistemic situation.

- misunderstanding
- Chalmers objection is circular

**DEBUNKING ARGUEMENTS**

- There is a correct explanation of our beliefs about C that is independent of C

- If (1.) Then those beliefs are not justified

→ *beliefs about C are not justified*

**MIND-BODY-PROBLEM**  
neither side can, without begging the question against the opponent, show that the other's position is untenable  
**AND ILLUSIONISM**

- as a metaphysics has trouble accounting for value & meaning
  - its spread has a potentially corrosive effect

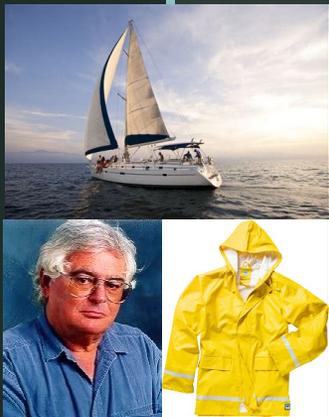
# DANIEL C. DENNETT

*Qualia are virtual, and none the worse for it. So are songs and dollars*

*Nachts sind alle Katzen grau*

Once upon a time Dan and Jerry went for sailing trip. As always Jerry was wearing his yellow jacket. However, just before dawn Dan believed that it is yellow even though he did not 'see' it.

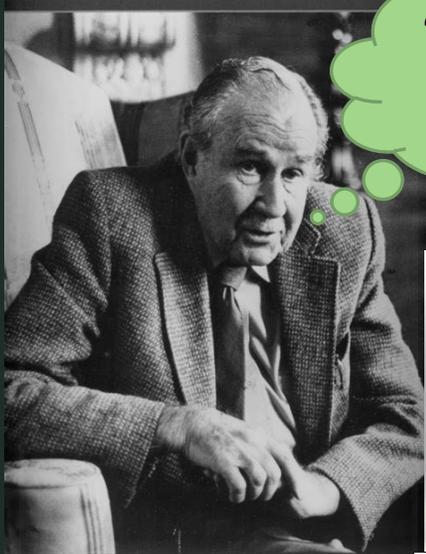
*That made him think that we all have underprivileged access to our own conscious experiences...*



## BRAIN STATES

- don't have experiential properties
  - but they have properties
- IN THE BRAIN THERE ARE REPRESENTATIONS OF COLOR, BUT THEY ARE NOT COLORFUL

Dan, qualia are what make life worth living!



Pain is real, and awful, but there is no such thing as "intrinsic awfulness"

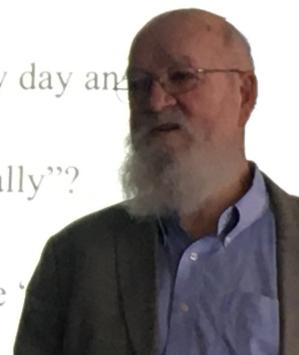
Colors are real but are not "intrinsic" properties of things.

Alexandrite is an "emerald by day and ruby by night."

What color is alexandrite "really"?

Bad question.

Dollars are real but don't have "economic value"



If qualia are what matter, then they are *functionally specifiable*.



MENTAL PAINT  
~~Ned Block~~  
PRODUCTIONS

virtual?!?



# KRZYSZTOF DOŁĘGA

## What do illusionists talk about when they say that there is 'something-it-is-like' to experience consciousness?



### ✓ There is sth.-it-is-like to be for a conscious creature!

- ❖ BUT this aspect of consciousness has to be cashed out entirely in functional terms (2<sup>nd</sup>-order representation)
- ❖ FUNNILY such representations misrepresent their contents as having phenomenal properties

Experiences are like-something when we misrepresent them as being 'like-something'

- Nagel's (1974) characterization of consciousness as 'what-it-is-like' is highly problematic and ambiguous:



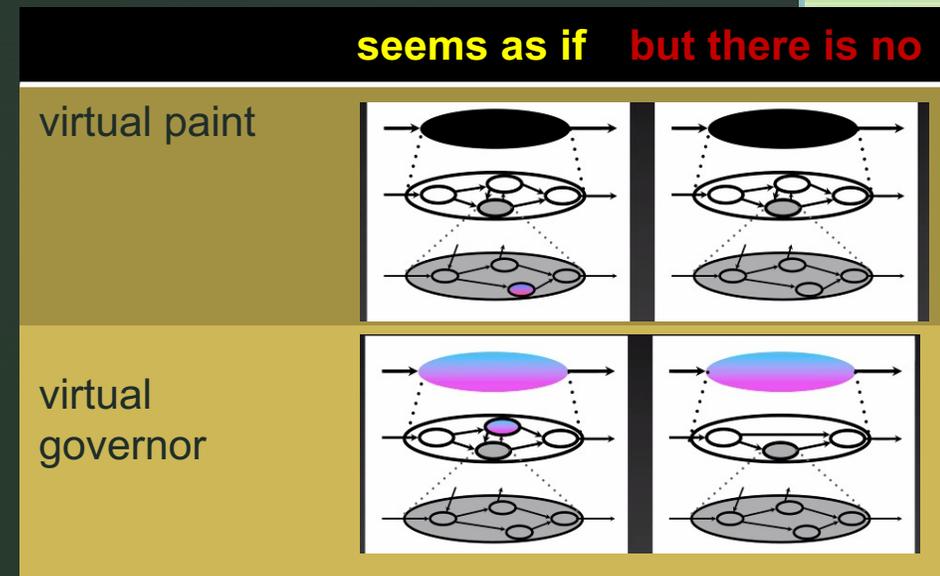
an organism has conscious states iff there is something it is like to be that organism — something it is like for the organism

Dennett' virtual approach:

1. treat phenomenal properties as virtual properties  
(virtual paint)
2. treat consciousness as a virtual governor  
(conscious beings behave as if there is a controller but there is none)

To be conscious is to instantiate a particular kind of virtual governor

applying the Craver-diagramm



# FRANÇOIS KAMMERER

## Defining consciousness & denying its existence. Sailing between Charybdis and Scylla



Ulysses can pass the Strait of Definitions, if understand that “phenomenal consciousness” expresses a concept that is both explicitly innocent & implicitly loaded.



Ulysses the illusionist  
sails towards



Strait of definitions

defines “phenomenal consciousness” in a highly loaded, theoretical manner

defines “phenomenal consciousness” in a pretheoretical, innocent manner



Charybdis

renders illusionism plausible



Scylla

makes illusionism seem highly implausible.

BUT there is another danger for Ulysses



Sirens of Redefinition

- *redefine* the terms, as to verbally salvage (weak) phenomenal realism

Ulysses should resist the Sirens’ songs & remain a strong illusionist in the face of temptation.

# HEDDA HASSEL MØRCH

## Breaking the stalemate between illusionism & realism

*Irresolvable clash of intuitions?*

### What should move the illusionist?

- Solution to the exclusion problem
  - Provided by panpsychism + the phenomenal powers view
- Solution to the combination problem
  - Does not require universalism

### What should move the realist?

- Solution to the illusion problem?
  - Already implied by physical causal closure
- Realism undermines consciousness science?
- Panpsychism implies universalism?
  - Universalism easily avoided, by assuming e.g., max  $\phi$  as correlate

### Realism leads to panpsychism

- Panpsychism is the best solution to the hard problem
  - All physical properties are structural
  - Structural/dispositional properties need intrinsic realizers
  - Phenomenal properties are intrinsic
  - Phenomenal properties could be the intrinsic realizers of everything physical
  - → Elegant integration into physical world + solution to exclusion problem

### PHENOMENAL POWERS PANPSYCHISM\*

- ❖ all causal power grounded in phenomenal powers
- ❖ phenomenal properties explain why we have this structure
- ❖ better (more robust) solution to the exclusion problem

\*Panpsychism + phenomenal power view



# DAVID PAPINEAU

## Reduce or Eliminate? The Varieties of Consciousness Worth Wanting

### 'CONSCIOUSNESS' IS NOT SHARP

- it is indeterminate
- no dualist consciousness
  - 'life' is not sharp either

### INDETERMINACIES & CONSCIOUS STATES

humans can report from conscious states

- *conscious states share*
  - carbon-based chemistry C & a more abstract structure S
- consciousness is S OR S+C?
- *conscious states share*
  - first-order quality F & higher-order feature H
- consciousness is F OR F+H?

### MORAL INTERLUDE

Does vagueness have unhappy moral implications?

- base moral reactions on our knowledge of physical natures
- don't wait on some supposed further questions of whether they are conscious
- think physically about how much higher-order Hs as opposed to first-order Fs matter to morality



I've always felt that the right response is to opt for a permissive notion of consciousness, and say yes there is consciousness (but it's just physical) rather than sound like an idiot and go round saying nobody is conscious.