CHAPTER 4

SOME CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWPOINTS ON: SELF, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BODY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

What contemporary philosophers have inherited from Descartes and his successors is not a solution to the mind-body problem but a sense of its depth and intractability. Descartes legacy may be put aptly in the words of Kripke’s observation that the mind-body problem is wide open and extremely confusing. Even though there is no unanimity regarding the exact relationship between the mind and body, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed a confident use of the new age scientific ideas amongst philosophers of mind to find an answer to the problem of consciousness which is another name of the age old mind-body problem.

Starting from Ryle’s classic The Concept of Mind (1949), through writings of philosophers like Wittgenstein, Davidson, Searle, Dennett, Chomsky, Nagel, McGinn, Smart, Armstrong, Fodor and many others working in the field of Philosophy of mind, the current status of this area of study is too vast to be meaningfully summarized by me. Mind-body problem still continues to enjoy a great popular appeal in the contemporary debate in philosophy of mind but in the course of time it has become so technical that it is not easy for a layman to follow it. Even though the interest remains the same the way we enquire has changed with time. Instead of the traditional approach we have changed the way we address the mind-body problem. Like Susan Greenfield we now more generally ask: “how does a wrinkled lump of grey matter weighing little more than a kilogram manage to think, love, dream and feel such widely different sensations as raw pleasure and numbing depressions?”

This of course assumes that the human brain is the seat of all mental activity. Advances in neurology, the physical study of the brain, using brain scanning, rare cases of localized brain damage, and so forth; the discovery of genetic causes of a variety of mental illnesses; and research into the effects of drugs on the brain allowed scientists

---

for the first time to offer physiological, material explanations to a variety of mental states. At the same time, advances in computer technology generated advanced forms of artificial intelligence. For the first time, humans-beings created artifacts that appeared more intelligent than themselves. Philosophy of mind experienced almost a renaissance due to the appearance of computer technology and other new disciplines such as neuroscience. These developments brought up the question whether a machine can emulate mind and whether it can become conscious. Philosophers called Naturalists or Physicalists or adherents of Identity Theories (mental events are identical with physical events) asserts that matter is all there is for us to study. Consciousness appears as an emergent property from matter, they say. Or, better still, it is suggested that once we develop the right concepts and ask the right questions we will be able to solve the mind-body problem once and for all. Philosophers, scientist, and writers keep wondering about the prospects for conscious artificial intelligence, and hence about the meaning of consciousness. The knowledge acquired about complex information processing through the analysis of systems, such as those of artificial intelligence, aroused expectations for attempting to understand the mind as a complex information-processing system, and consciousness in those terms. These developments have led to the founding of cognitive science. This led to re-examination of popular conceptions of the distinctive essences of humanity and specifically the mind-body problem. But there are others who do not succumb to this kind of materialistic interpretation of the mind.

In the last few decades of the twentieth century several intellectual developments led to refocusing of philosophy of mind on the problem of consciousness and spurred an academic search for more fruitful research programs and a return to the problem of consciousness. The major problem in this era remains the problem of consciousness, the feeling of subjectivity, the feeling of ‘I’. Biological evolution has revealed that consciousness is locked in the brain, rooted in its tissues. But this raises the question of the nature of this deep and intimate link. In order to understand this link contemporary philosophers of mind debate upon whether the mental and the physical belong to different realms or can there be a physical explanation of the mental? This question is rooted in the perennial conceptual
problem regarding the traditional divide between subjective and objective. This divide stands as a major obstacle in the acceptance of the fact that consciousness can arise from the brain processes. The relationship between science and consciousness is also central in much current theorizing on the topic: Why does it exist? What does it do? How could it possibly arise from a lump of grey matter? We know consciousness far more intimately than we know the rest of the world, but we understand the rest of the world far better than we understand consciousness. Consciousness can be startlingly intense. It is the most vivid phenomena; nothing is more real to us. But it can be frustrating in the sense that it is notoriously difficult to pin down the subject matter of it. Modern science tells us that the mind is just the brain working. But science cannot tell us how consciousness or the sense of self arises out of the merely material processes of the brain. Could our confidence that the mind is just the brain working be misplaced? How does brain bind together various sensory inputs to produce a unified subjective experience? What are neural correlates of consciousness? Could an appropriately constructed machine be conscious? Analysis regarding questions of these sorts takes the centre stage in the domain of philosophy of mind. In the contemporary terms the question about mind can be mostly enumerated in terms of the question: How could a conscious mental state have any impact on a physical object such as the human body? Can the mind be fully explained by the brain? What kind of thing is a brain, that it makes consciousness possible? What is the nature of the bond that connects our conscious experience with the workings of the grey matter in our heads? So, contemporary philosophers of mind are indulging themselves in finding answers to them by an understanding of the concepts of self, consciousness and the body.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND IN THE CONTEMPORARY TIMES

A study of contemporary philosophy of mind without reference to Gilbert Ryle remains incomplete. In The Concept of Mind, he admits to having been taken in by the mind-body dualism which permeates Western Philosophy and propounded that it should be rejected. He shared Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy, and is principally known for his critique of Cartesian dualism for which he coined the phrase
“the ghost in the machine”\(^2\). Some of his ideas in the philosophy of mind have been referred to as behaviorism. Ryle begins the concept of Mind by proposing that there is an “official doctrine”\(^3\) of mind due to Descartes: “The official doctrine, which hails chiefly from Descartes, is something like this. With the doubtful exception of idiots and infants in arms every human being has both a body and a mind….“\(^4\) He considers the “official doctrine”\(^5\) to be absurd: “Such is the outline of the official theory; I shall speak of it, with deliberate abusiveness, as ‘dogma of the ghost in the machine.’”\(^6\) According to him the “official doctrine”\(^7\) is due to a particular mistake that he calls a “category mistake”\(^8\) and thereby argues that the concept ‘mind’ is a philosophical illusion hailing chiefly from Descartes. After Ryle, dualism has been under severe attack in the twentieth century.

During the period after Ryle, psychology and brain science began to be studied in a rational and a more systematic manner. Despite a good beginning, the study of human mind or consciousness soon fell out of fashion and a new dark age had descended over. This occurred primarily due to the rise of Behaviorism. Human consciousness phenomenon was considered to be too subjective in nature and not conducive to experimental analysis. This orthodoxy of Behaviorism dominated for a long time. While the study of human consciousness was stagnant, important scientific discoveries were made in other areas of life sciences, particularly genetics. In the late 1960’s there was a revival of the study of consciousness from the Behavioral dark age. Behaviorism still survived during the 1960’s and 1970’s, but only as a declining intellectual movement that was in the last gasp of popularity.

The recent philosophy of mind which gave the study of mind a new insight may be traced to Thomas Nagel’s ground breaking reformulation of the mind-body problem. He is one of the leading defenders of the concept of phenomenal

---

\(^2\) Gilbert Ryle, op. cit., p.17.
\(^3\) Ibid, p.1.
\(^6\) Ibid, p.17.
\(^7\) Ibid, p.1.
\(^8\) Ibid, p.67.
Chapter 4: Some Contemporary Philosophical Viewpoints on: Self, Consciousness and the Body

consciousness. In his famous article “What it is Like to be a Bat,” he asked whether the physical-material external description of the brain states could ever explain the mental internal experience of consciousness. He wrote: “…fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is to be that organism – something it is like for the organism.” In particular Nagel points out that there are likely to be states within a bat that cannot be imagined by humans. He considers that reductionism leaves out something essential in our understanding: “If we acknowledge that a physical theory of mind must account for the subjective character of experience, we must admit that no presently available conception gives us a clue how this could be done. The problem is unique. If mental processes are indeed physical processes, then there is something it is like, intrinsically, to undergo certain physical processes. What it is for such a thing to be the case remains a mystery.” He argued that there is and always will be an ‘explanatory gap’ between our conscious experiences and what a science of the mind may explain, however sophisticated it becomes. It will never be able to explain ‘what it is like’ to have specific points of view, for example, what it is like to be a bat, hang upside down from the ceiling, and sense radar rays.

After Nagel, advances in neuroimaging, brain mapping, and the science of A.I caused a new generation of researchers to investigate human consciousness. Much of the debate centered on reasons for affirming or denying the existence of the ‘explanatory gap’. John Searle suggested that though consciousness is a natural phenomenon, we lack the concepts and theories to close the explanatory gap by eliminating consciousness. In the heydays of Artificial Intelligence a computational model of the mind called the ‘Turing test’ was proposed, but Searle and others with the Chinese Room experiment have convincingly shown that a computer or a Turing machine cannot have what we call consciousness.

Functionalists such as D.M. Armstrong and Hillary Putnam proposed to characterize the states of consciousness by their causes and effects, rather than by

---

11 Ibid, p.450.
their internal properties. Physicalists claim that ultimate reality is material and can be described by Physics. Both consider the ‘explanatory gap’ as a problem of reduction of the mental to the physical. They recognize that there is at present an ‘explanatory gap’, but they believe that it may be possible to close it through a successful scientific reduction of the mental to the physical theories. Some advocated that such a reduction will prove that a type of conscious state such as being in love or seeing red color will be reduced to a physical or chemical description of the brain state. Others, such as Patricia and Paul Churchland, envisioned the reduction of what they call ‘folk psychology’ to an advanced neuroscience along the lines of the reduction by chemical theories of ordinary descriptions of chemical interactions to a small number of types of basic elements and the laws that govern their interactions. Such a reduction may demonstrate correspondence between several types of physical interaction and the same conscious state, as the same tune may be played by a variety of different orchestral arrangements. The noted neuroscientist Antonio Damasio in his book titled *The Feeling of What Happens* makes the following statement: “The traditional worlds of philosophy and psychology have gradually joined forces with the world of biology and created an odd but productive alliance. For e.g. by means of loose federation of scientific approaches currently known as cognitive neuroscience, the alliance has permitted new advances in the understanding of vision, memory, language. There is a good reason to expect that the alliance will assist the understanding of consciousness as well.”

But there are others like David Chalmers is not very optimistic of this alliance. He argues that scientific material external explanations cannot explain consciousness. He believes that it is possible to conceive of a universe where the descriptions of material states of affairs that explain consciousness are true, but people do not have consciousness i.e. a world of zombies that act in response to stimuli without being conscious. For example people may react to hunger by eating and to danger by defending themselves without being conscious of dining or fighting. Such a problem does not exist when scientists reduce water to two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. One alternative to Cartesian dualism is what Chalmers calls the ‘naturalistic

---

dualism’. The naturalistic dualism for which Chalmers argues is a form of property dualism. The idea is that conscious experience involves properties of an individual that are not entailed by the physical properties of that individual, although they may depend lawfully on those properties. What makes this form of naturalism is its insistence that we can explain consciousness in terms of basic natural laws. Accordingly, conscious properties can’t be reduced to physical properties. Colin McGinn (1991) went further by suggesting that human beings are forever blocked from knowing the link between physical brain states and consciousness because of cognitive closure. Introspective consciousness provides no immediate knowledge of brains, while neuroscientific knowledge of brains provides no access to consciousness. Dennett on the other hand goes on to say that there is, in the final analysis nothing fundamentally inexplicable about the way we attribute consciousness to people. In his attempt to demystify consciousness he gives an account of how consciousness arises from interaction of physical and cognitive processes in the brain. He puts an end to the concept of ‘self’ as the center of conscious experiences and calls it a fictional creation.

Taking inheritance from the traditional philosophy of mind even the competing theories in the contemporary debate in the philosophy of mind can be broadly categorized into that of dualism and materialism (or physicalism). While there are many versions of each, the former generally holds that the conscious mind or a conscious mental state is non-physical in some sense. Whereas, to put it crudely, the later holds that the mind is the brain, or is caused by neural activity. It is against this general backdrop that many answers to the above questions are formulated and developed. For example it is often said that materialism cannot truly explain just how or why some brain states are conscious, and that there is an important ‘explanatory gap’ between the mind and the matter. On the other hand dualism faces the problem of explaining how a non-physical substance or mental state can causally interact with the physical body. Dualists like Descartes may be rare nowadays but many philosophers do not accept that matter alone can explain mental phenomena and seem to suggest a milder form of dualism. They argue that any objective physical science would leave an ‘explanatory gap’ failing to describe what it is like to have a particular experience and failing to explain why there are phenomenal experiences at all.
It has also been a trend nowadays to divide loosely the problems about the human mind into the easy and hard ones. The former refers to empirical brain research and experimental psychology, implying that there are no mysteries involved. On the other hand, the later one acknowledges philosophical problems about the relation between mind and body like that of the ‘explanatory gap’ and so on and advocates that mind-body still remains a mystery. Based on the varied perceptions about the mind, the contemporary philosophers of mind may be broadly divided into the following two wide categories:

1) Those who believe that the mind-body problem especially the problem of consciousness can never be fully understood however much we may learn about the functions of the brain. We may call this a mysterian or pessimistic view. A related view is that we are asking needlessly meaningless questions which cannot be answered.

2) Those who are positive about the possibility of consciousness being explained in terms of the standard methods of cognitive science in terms of computational or neural mechanisms. All we need is an appropriate cognitive or neurophysiological model. Getting details right might take a very long time but we have enough reasons to believe that the problem of consciousness will definitely be unveiled.

Since an examination of all the contemporary philosopher’s views on self, consciousness and the body is not possible, so, I would try to incorporate the major ones who represent one or the other of the above stated views. On one side are those like Dennett, Searle and Chalmers who believe that mind-body problem can be solved with the right approach, right method and right apparatus. On the other side we have others like McGinn who believe that this problem represents one of the insolvable mysteries of human life. Both the sides will be duly analysed. After this brief introduction, in what follows I present as cited an account of the important contemporary philosopher’s views of the concept of self, consciousness and the body.
4.3 DANIEL DENNETT

After a brief hiatus as researchers and philosophers were beginning to turn more attention to the nature of consciousness, Dennett authored *Consciousness Explained* which claimed to have tackled perhaps the hardest question humanity has ever asked – ‘What is conscious experience?’ His answer is that only a theory that explained conscious events in terms of unconscious events could explain consciousness at all. Any theory of consciousness has got to explain how consciousness can arise from a number of components, which themselves are not conscious. That is the key.

He says, “Consciousness is one of the last frontiers of science where we do not even know how to think about the problem yet.”\(^{13}\) He reflects on how and why the problem of consciousness haunts us as he writes: “Human consciousness is just about the last surviving mystery. A mystery is a phenomenon that people don’t know how to think about – yet. There have been other great mysteries: the mystery of the origin of the universe, the mystery of life and reproduction, and the mystery of the design to be found in nature, the mysteries of time, space and gravity. These were not just areas of scientific ignorance, but of utter bafflement and wonder. We do not yet have all the answers to any of the questions of cosmology and particle physics, molecular genetics and evolutionary theory, but we do know how to think about them….With consciousness, however, we are still in a terrible muddle. Consciousness stands alone today as a topic that often leaves even the most sophisticated thinker tongue tied and confused. And as with all earlier mysteries, there are many who insist – and hope there will never be a demystification of consciousness.”\(^{14}\) Dennett himself is a great demystifier of consciousness. According to him there is, in the final analysis nothing fundamentally inexplicable about the way we attribute intentions and conscious feeling to people. It is because of the thrill associated with mysteries that we do not want a demystification of the conscious phenomenon. The mystery is caused by the fact that our physical bodies are conscious of internal and external happenings and take pleasure in it. *Consciousness Explained* discusses on how consciousness may be explained mechanistically. In his attempt to demystify consciousness he gives an account of how consciousness arises from interaction of


\(^{14}\) Ibid. p.21-22.
physical and cognitive processes in the brain. Also he puts a final nail to the coffin of the general notion of ‘self’ when he call it a fictional entity. According to him there exists no such self which is the central head of all our conscious experiences as there is, “no single definitive ‘stream of consciousness’, because there is no central headquarters, no ‘Cartesian theatre’ where it all comes together. Instead of such a single stream(however wide), there are multiple channels in which specialist circuits try, in parallel pandemonium, to do their various things, creating Multiple Drafts as they go.”

He presents a powerful critique of the mainstream view of the nature of consciousness, which he names as ‘The Cartesian Theatre View’ and thereby tried to develop a new theory of consciousness called ‘The Multiple Drafts Model’. He attempts a third-person, analytic approach to the investigation of the mind-body problem, as opposed to the traditional first-person, inductive approach found in Descartes and Searle. He suggests an alternative way to see the mind, a way to join the subjective experience of consciousness with the meat and neurons in the brain. He tries to show that the old ways of thinking are not necessarily the only way to think about the mind. His primary concern is with providing a philosophy of mind that is governed by empirical research. He holds that consciousness is a function of the physical brain and not a mysterious property of the ‘lump of wonder-stuff’ that so often gets termed as a ‘soul’ or ‘self’. He believes that with the onslaught of empirical and conceptual advances in the cognitive science the mysteries surrounding consciousness are beginning to dissolve.

Dennett puts his theory in perspective as primarily philosophical. This is not to say that his theory is without empirical content – it has such content but the basic emphasis is on theoretical aspects. When his philosopher’s hat is on, he is primarily concerned with making a theory-sketch which shows the possible routes a full theory could take, or refutes supposed claims of impossibility. Initially in the *Consciousness Explained* a survey of consciousness is enumerated and then the difficulties associated with it are diagnosed to establish a method. The goal is to create a materialistic, scientifically supported model that can explain us about the puzzling phenomena. He begins with how the problem of the distinction between mind-body or mind-brain has been troubling philosophers for millennia. From the early musings of ancient Greek

philosophers to modern day science the debate is ongoing. Most early attempts drew a distinction between the physical world of the brain and, for want of a better term, the spiritual world of the mind. This separation is referred to in the philosophy as ‘dualism’. The dualist thinks that consciousness is somehow disembodied and cannot be successfully explained in the physical world. But at the same time they could not disown the empirical truth that mind-body, even though entirely separate entities by nature, did interact with each other. The initiator of dualism, Descartes, thought hard about this problem, but he decided that the brain did have a center: the pineal gland where this interaction between these opposite entities takes place. He proposed that for a person to be conscious of something, traffic from the senses had to arrive at this location, where it is then “caused a special-indeed magical transaction to occur between the person’s material brain and immaterial mind.”

Today no one seriously believes in dualism but we still encounter many sophisticated materialists who often forget to discard a centralized gateway or a functional center to the brain even though they understand very well that it is not required once Descartes’ ghostly res cogitans is discarded. Contrary to the dualistic beliefs, Dennett holds that the pineal gland or any other physical part of the brain is not the fax machine to the soul or the central office of the brain. This means that there is no Cartesian like observer gland inside the brain.

Dennett points out that even after years of discarding the anatomical baggage of Descartes’ dualism, it is hard for many to discard the idea of a ‘central processing’ area in the mind. Dennett compares the idea that there is a crucial finish line or boundary somewhere in the brain, marking a place where the order of stimuli arrival equals the order of presentation to that of the ‘Cartesian Theatre,’ the celebrated model of consciousness devised by Rene Descartes in the 17th century. ‘Cartesian theatre’ put simply is that there is a sort of ‘screen’ or ‘stage’ in which experience presents themselves to us – to the mind’s eye. That is, there appears to be a central place where experiences are ‘screened’ before us. Further, it seems that mental states being screened in the theatre are in consciousness and the mental states outside of the theatre are not in consciousness. In this central place there is supposed to be a singular point in time in which, at a given a particular sensory input, consciousness of the

---

16 Ibid, p.105.
input happens. It promotes the view that for every day and macroscopic time intervals, we can indeed order events into the two categories ‘not yet observed’ and ‘already observed’. Most importantly it is based on the assumption that there is a ‘self’ – that is someone who is inside the theatre, watching the show. Dennett attacks the view ‘Cartesian materialism’ which he defines very precisely as the idea that there is a Cartesian theatre in the brain: “Let’s call the idea of such a centered locus in the brain Cartesian materialism, since its the view you arrive at when you discard Descartes’ dualism but fail to discard the imagery of central (but material) theatre where it all comes together. The pineal gland will be one candidate for such a Cartesian theatre, but there are others that have been suggested – the anterior cingulated, the reticular formation, and various places in the frontal lobes. Cartesian materialism is the view that there is a crucial finish line or boundary somewhere in the brain, marking a place where the order of arrival equals to the order of presentation in experience because what happens there is what you are conscious.”

Dennett presents a meticulous deconstruction of what he calls ‘The Cartesian Theatre’. He strongly objects the ‘Cartesian Theatre’ concept in which the images of the outside and inside world are projected on a sort of screen for an inner observer or ‘self’. This model depends entirely on a ‘person inside’ who witnesses the activities of the body and acts. But Dennett questions as to who, or what, is the ‘person inside’ like that is reading these neurological archives? Is it the – the self or the ego or the soul? The ‘Cartesian Theater’ is believed to be the summit in the brain located at the intersection between preconscious and post conscious processing. But it is an empirical fact that there is no such summit, no module or process in the brain which witnesses a show, so something must be wrong with the way the experiment has been interpreted. According to him, for the want of a theory of consciousness, it is easy to fall back on the assumption of the image of a little person – a homunculus, the philosophers call it – who sits in the control room monitoring a console of gauges and pulling the right strings. But then, of course, we’re stuck with explaining the inner workings of this engineer-marionette. Does it too have a little creature inside it? If yes, than Dennett points out that we will all fall into an infinite regress, with homunculi embedded in homunculi like an image rebounding between mirrors. Even

though there is a very real sense in which our own first person experience of consciousness leads us to Cartesian materialism, yet, he argues that given certain philosophical considerations, together with certain work in the psychology and neuroscience of consciousness, our sense of being in a ‘Cartesian theatre’ is illusory. The assumption of the concept of the ‘self’ inside the ‘Cartesian theatre’ can be compared to the scene in the movie *Man in Black* where the actor Will Smith presses a concealed button behind the big alien’s ear, and then the alien’s head opens up revealing a green man sitting inside. The little green man sat in front of a range of buttons and is actually controlling the outer body and making all decisions. That is the ‘Cartesian theatre’. But it is obvious why it is not an explanation of consciousness at all; one has still got to explain, what is going on inside the little green man’s head. The same applies to the soul or self. We haven’t got any theory of consciousness at all but only an infinite regress of assumptions.\(^{18}\)

Dennett holds that there is no special stuff of consciousness – there is no central observer of the mind. His theory of the self is deflationary in nature. There is, he says, no simple answer to this question which speaks to the very confusions that surround the idea of a ‘self’. This is because human consciousness is a product not only of natural selection, but also of cultural and language evolution as well. The evolution of culture is an innovator of the consciousness of selves. Selves are nothing but artifacts of the social processes that create us. The human beings spin the concept of ‘self’ with a ‘web of discourses.’ He holds: “We in contrast, are almost constantly engaged in presenting ourselves to others, and to ourselves, and hence representing ourselves in language and gesture, external and internal. The most obvious difference in our environment that would explain this difference in our behavior is the behavior itself. Our human environment contains not just food and shelter, enemies to fight or flee, and con-specifies with whom to mate, but words, words, words. These words are potent elements of our environment that we readily incorporate, ingesting and extruding them, weaving them like spider-webs into self-protective strings of narrative.”\(^{19}\) He further enumerates that: “Selves are not physically detectable. Instead, they are a kind of convenient fiction, like centre of gravity, which are

---

\(^{18}\) Daniel C. Dennett, Heterophenomenology reconsidered – Tufts Univ. ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/hre-considered.pdf

\(^{19}\) Daniel C. Dennet, op. cit., p.417.
convenient as a way of solving physics problems, although they need not correspond
to anything tangible – the center of gravity of a hoop is a point in thin air. People
constantly tell themselves stories to make sense of their world, and they feature in the
stories as a character, and that convenient but fictional character is the self.”\textsuperscript{20} Thus,
the ‘self’ as a fictional creation is necessary for cultural and social reasons.
Consciousness is an agent-produced narrative in stream-of-consciousness form, and
the self is the ‘narrative centre of gravity’. Essentially the self is not a pre-existing
mental entity that orchestrates events but on the contrary it is an after the fact creation
(continued re-creation) of the agents. Dennett thinks that postulating a non-physical
self or soul is nothing more than a typical ‘god of the gap’ argument. The assumption
of the existence of the self in philosophy of mind is compared by him to the way to
how primitive religions would use Gods to explain how and why rain and thunder
occurred or the diversity of life on earth, until a hundred or so years ago. These
arguments were of course deeply flawed as we can see them today. The arguments
assumed things even without understanding what really caused the weather or
diversity on earth and hence are bad explanations. In fact they did not explain
anything at all. Similar is the case with our present obsession with the concept of
‘self’ according to Dennett. Saying that “science hasn’t found the answer to the
problem yet, therefore it needs a god (or mysterious soul) to explain it is rather
missing the point. By postulating a ‘soul’, we haven’t done any explaining at all,
merely deferred the problem by maintaining the ‘Cartesian theatre…”\textsuperscript{21}

Dennett thus hold strong opposition against the traditional theories of
consciousness and self. His complete disregard for them is reflected when he says:
“These strings or streams of narrative issue forth as if from a single source – not just
in the obvious physical sense of flowing from just one mouth, or one pencil or pen,
but in a more subtle sense: their effect on any audience is to encourage them to
(try to) posit a unified agent whose words they are, about whom they are: in short, to
posit a centre of narrative gravity. Physicists appreciate the enormous
simplification.”\textsuperscript{22} So, it is due to our own convenience that we weave the story of a

\textsuperscript{20} Daniel C. Dennett, “The Self as The Centre of Narrative Gravity” in Self and Consciousness:
Multiple Perspectives, F.Kessel, P.Cole and D.Johnson, eds., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New

\textsuperscript{21} Daniel C. Dennett, Consciousness Explained, op. cit., 76.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 418.
Chapter 4: Some Contemporary Philosophical Viewpoints on: Self, Consciousness and the Body

‘sself’. After strongly criticizing the general notion of a self he presents a workable alternative theory: The Multiple Drafts Model of consciousness which provides an alternative to the ‘Cartesian model’. According to Dennett, we need to stop thinking of the brain as if it had a single functional summit or central point. To do so the Multiple Drafts Model is one possible candidate. According to it the brain has many parallel information processing streams. At any point of time there are various narrative fragments or drafts, which are at different stages of editing. According to Dennett, these drafts are not sent to a single place in the brain for viewing. But some or all of them may come together in the events that they need to determine the behavior for the organism. He maintains that there is no single point in the brain where the information funnels in and where everything comes together for central processing. There is nothing like a Cartesian Theatre, or a central processing unit (CPU) in the brain, in which all the commands are executed. Nor is there a viewer of such events called the ‘sself’, as they flow through the CPU. Further, according to Dennett asking ‘which events are conscious?’ is to conceive of a Cartesian theatre in which one or more drafts come before an audience. There is in actuality no audience which has experiences. So, the MDM is a theory of consciousness that is based upon the proposal that the brain acts as an information processor and thereby proposes a form of strong AI. It suggests that there is no single central place or a ‘Cartesian Theater’ where conscious experience occurs; instead there are “various events of content-fixation occurring in various places at various times in the brain”\(^{23}\) The brain consists of a “bundle of semi-independent agencies”\(^ {24}\); when ‘content-fixation’ takes place in one of these, its effects may propagate so that it leads to the utterances that make up the story in which the central character is one’s ‘sself’. Dennett describes the theory as operationalist, as he says: “There is no reality of conscious experience independent of the effects of various vehicles of content on subsequent action (and hence, of course, on memory).”\(^ {25}\)

Dennett’s starting point in the development of the Multiple Drafts theory is a description of the phi illusion. In this experiment two colored lights, with an angular separation of a few degrees at the eye, are flashed in succession. If the interval

\(^ {23}\) Ibid, p.365.
\(^ {24}\) Ibid, p.260.
\(^ {25}\) Ibid, p.132.
between the flashes is less than a second or so, the first light that is flashed appears to move across to the position of the second light. Furthermore the light seems to change color as it moves across the visual field. A green light will appear to turn red as it seems to move across to the position of a red light. Dennett asks how we could see the lights change color before the second light is observed. Dennett relates the phi illusion to a series of rational errors that plague the subject of consciousness, undeniably universal errors such as that of the phi illusion, wherein one posits flashes as movements, and the subject’s tendency to say two related but two distinct words at the same time. This leads to Dennett asserting that consciousness to be not a point where one thinks but a desk where one composes ‘Multiple Drafts’.

According to the MDM theory there are a variety of interpretations of the inputs received in the brain. The sensory inputs arrive in the brain and are interpreted at different times and so a given event can give rise to a succession of discriminations. As soon as discrimination is accomplished it becomes available for eliciting behaviour. A wide range of behaviours may occur from reactions to the event such as running away to descriptions of the experience of the event etc.

In the MDM model, all varieties of perception – indeed, all varieties of thought or mental activity – are accomplished in the brain by parallel, multi track processes of interpretation and elaboration of sensory inputs. “Information entering the nervous system is under continuous editorial revision.” These editorial processes occur over large fractions of second, during which various additions, incorporations and over writings of contents can occur in different order. It eventually yields something rather like a narrative stream or sequence, which can be thought of as a subject to continual editing. At any point of time however there are ‘multiple drafts’ of narrative fragments at various places in the brain. Once a particular observation has been made by a specialized, localized portion of the brain, the information does not have to be rediscriminated by some master discriminator. There is no need for a central observer like that is supposed in the ‘Cartesian theatre’.

26 Ibid, p. 111.
These spatially and temporally distributed content-fixations in the brain are precisely locatable in both space and time, but their onsets don’t mark the onset of consciousness of their content. It is therefore always an open question whether any particular content thus discriminated will eventually appear as an element of conscious experience. There is no functional difference between that process and any prior stages and revisions that might be called unconscious or preconscious. If there is no distinction or content–fixation, than, where does it all come together for consciousness? Dennett’s answer is that ‘nowhere’. Some of these distributed contentful states soon die out, leaving no further traces. Others do leave traces, on subsequent verbal reports of experience and memory. Some of these effects – for instance, influences on subsequent verbal reports – are at least symptomatic of consciousness. But there is no one place in the brain through which these causal trains must pass in order to deposit their content in consciousnesses.

Of course, introspectively, we do have a sense of having sequences of events flowing through consciousness. It seems as if the contents are bound together as if they were the experiences of an ongoing self. Dennett does not deny this. But this sense is not due to there being a central place or time in the brain where consciousness comes together or to there being a self as a viewer of events, inside a ‘Cartesian theatre’. It rejects the notion of self as an inner observer, whether located in the ‘Cartesian theatre’ or elsewhere. The self may be just as gappy as consciousness. It is an artifact of the social processes that create us. The MDM treats the self as an emergent or virtual aspect of coherent roughly serially narrative that is constructed through the interactive play of contents in the system. The relevant contents are not unified because they are all observed by a single self, but just the converse. It is because they are unified and coherent at the level of content that they count as the experiences of a single self. Instead the self is a ‘centre of narrative gravity’ is a kind of program that is created by “a web of words and deeds.....The web protects it, just like the snail’s shield and provides a livelihood.”27 The sense in which there is a sequence of events in consciousness occurs when the stream is probed, for example, by asking a question. On Dennett’s view, there are no facts about the stream of

---

consciousness aside from the particular probes. The name ‘Multiple Drafts’ reflects the fact that any given moment content fixations of many sorts is occurring throughout the brain. What makes some of these contents conscious is not that they occur in a privileged spatial or functional location – the so called ‘Cartesian theatre’ – or in a special mode or format, all of which the MDM denies. Rather it is a matter of what Dennett calls ‘cerebral celebrity’, i.e., the degrees to which a given content influences the further development of other contents throughout the brain, especially with regard to how those effects are manifested in reports and behaviors that the person makes in response to various probes that might indicate her conscious state.

What makes MDM different is that it either denies that normal conscious experiences actually occur or describes these as emerging in some unspecified way from the sheer complexity of information processing in the brain. Multiple Drafts Model shows that the different parts of the brain must act on different sets of information and, therefore, there is no single conscious experience. This is one of the most profound points that Dennett explores throughout his celebrated work *Consciousness Explained*.

As an example of an apparent denial of conscious experiences, Dennett denies that there is any internal experience commonly termed as ‘qualia’ or the ‘hard problem of consciousness.’ The hard problem of consciousness is the problem of why, in addition to the information processing that the brain engages in, there must be a feeling of what it is like associated with the neural processing. It is fair to say that the hard problem has been regarded as one of the central puzzles of consciousness. Dennett claims that qualia, the reason for the existence of the hard problem doesn’t exist. In *Consciousness Explained*, he offers an argument against qualia that attempts to show that the definition of qualia breaks down when one tries to make a practical application of it. He holds that qualia can be rejected as non-existent: “So when we look one last time at our original characterization of qualia, as ineffable, intrinsic, private, directly apprehensible properties of experience, we find that there is nothing to fill the bill. In their place are relatively or practically ineffable public properties we can refer to indirectly via reference to our private property-detractors-private only in the sense of idiosyncratic. And insofar as we wish to cling to our subjective authority about the occurrence within us of states of certain types or with certain properties, we
can have some authority – not infallibility or incorrigibility, but something better than sheer guessing – but only if we restrict ourselves to relational, extrinsic properties like the power of certain internal states of ours to provoke acts of apparent re-identification. So, contrary to what seems obvious at first blush, there simply are no qualia at all.” ²⁸

He denies the existence of qualia and thus rejects any attempt to distinguish conscious states from nonconscious states by their presence. The idea of qualia is a knotted string (based on self reference, intuition and the Cartesian Theatre) that should be just thrown away and replaced with a new string (based on the MDM). His main argument is that the various properties attributed to qualia by philosophers are it being incorrigible, ineffable, private, directly accessible and so on are absolutely incompatible, and so the notion of qualia is incoherent. He proposes that it is perfectly, logically possible that the quale of what it is like to see red could eventually be described in an English-language description of millions or billions of words.

The story of the origin of consciousness is analogous to other stories of biological evolution. He suggests that we must pause in our external scrutiny of the “black box” of consciousness for a moment, and instead consider how consciousness might have arisen evolutionarily. Since human consciousness is obviously a relatively recent phenomenon (evolutionarily speaking), it must have evolved from prior processes that themselves weren’t actually conscious. Human consciousness is a huge complex of memes (or more exactly, meme-effects in the brains). Like modern computers with hard wired processing, but with lots of memory to store programs for almost any imaginable purpose, the human mind at birth is a hard-wired and ready to go, but blank so far as software is concerned. Our brains apparently use hundreds or thousands of parallel processes to perceive and interpret the world. This fact is often cited as a reason why A.I. or artificial intelligence is not possible, even in principle. On the other hand, the striking similarity between computers and our conscious minds (that we have access to) is that both computers and human consciousness or minds, use serial processing. In other words, just as the computer considers instructions one at a time, so, our minds seem to consider ideas in a serial stream of consciousness.

Dennett’s MDM has been highly influential but has also drawn criticism, especially from those who find it insufficiently realist in its view of consciousness and at best incomplete in achieving its stated goal to fully explain it. Many of its critics acknowledge the insight and value of the MDM, but deny that there are no real facts of consciousness other than those captured by it. Research subsequent to Dennett’s book indicates that some of his postulations were more conservative than expected. Critics of Dennett’s approach, such as David Chalmers and Thomas Nagel, argue that Dennett’s argument misses the point of inquiry by merely re-defining consciousness as an external property and ignoring the subjective aspect completely. This has led detractors to name his book Consciousness explained as “Consciousness Ignored and Conscious Explained Away.” 29 Dennett and his supporters, however, respond that the aforementioned ‘subjective aspects’ as commonly used is non-existent and unscientific, and that his ‘re-definition’ is the only coherent description of consciousness.

4.4 JOHN SEARLE

Searle aims to offer a solution to the perennial problems in the history of philosophy commonly known as the mind-body problem by deconstructing existing theories and offering new perspectives using logic, personal experiences and cases from neuroscience and psychological research. His solution has a well thought out foundation and is extremely difficult for others to uproot. His approach to any philosophical problem has always been straight forward. He believes that in order to solve a philosophical problem one has to forget about the philosophical history of a problem and remind oneself only of the facts related to it as any philosophical theory has to be consistent with the facts. According to him the root of majority of the philosophical problems is that we are still entangled in the old categories and ingrained habits of thoughts that need to be discarded. In order to find a solution to the age old mind-body problem or more specifically the problem about the conscious phenomenon we must start afresh.

Consciousness is a biological problem. The brain causes consciousness. The most important scientific discovery of the present era will come when someone – or

some group – discovers the answer to the following question: How exactly do neurobiological processes in the brain cause consciousness? This is the most important question facing us in biological sciences, yet it is frequently evaded and frequently misunderstood when not evaded. Philosophical problem about consciousness arises because we are not ready to accept realities such as the one that publicly observable phenomena – the brain processes – produce the private, subjective characteristic of all consciousness. This is known in philosophy of mind as the hard problem but Searle prefers to call it the fundamental problem. Searle is of the opinion that breakthrough to explaining consciousness will come from some simple system when we learn to accept some fundamental truths. He has been arguing in a number of writings that the philosophical part (though not the neurobiological part) of the traditional mind-body problem has a fairly simple and obvious solution. All of our mental phenomena are caused by lower level neuronal processes in the brain and are themselves realized in the brain as higher level, or system features. There is nothing mysterious regarding the conscious phenomenon and that consciousness arises by genetic evolution.

Searle argued that starting with Behaviorism much of modern philosophy has tried to deny the existence of consciousness but with little success. Dennet whom we have discussed before this is of the opinion that discussing the subjective aspect of consciousness is unscientific and nonsense because science presupposes objectivity. But Searle thinks that Dennett is actually committing a category error. Dennett’s view that there is no consciousness in addition to the computational features implies that conscious states are nothing but illusory. According to Searle conscious experiences cannot be dismissed the way Dennett did only because they are not ontologically objective. Searle points out that: “where consciousness is concerned, the existence of appearance is the reality.”

One major problem regarding the analysis of consciousness is that the word ‘consciousness’ does not have an agreed meaning. So the meaning of ‘consciousness’ while discussing it as a central concept varies between people. According to him although it is not possible to give a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions or

---

genus and differentia or to give a noncircular verbal definition it is necessary to say what is meant by the notion because it is often confused with several others. Consciousness to him is “the primary and most essential feature of mind.” He defines consciousness as: “those subjective states of sentience or awareness that begin when one awakes in the morning from a dreamless sleep and continue throughout the day until one goes to sleep at night or falls into a coma, or dies, or otherwise becomes, as one would say, ‘unconscious’.” Searle believes consciousness to be a biological phenomenon. We should think of consciousness as a part of our ordinary biological history, along with digestion, growth, mitosis and meiosis. However, though consciousness is a biological phenomenon, it has some important features that other biological phenomenon do not have. The essential features of consciousness, in all its forms, are its inner, qualitative, and subjective nature. For each conscious state there is a certain way that it feels. He agrees with Thomas Nagel who had held the same kind of opinion. Searle endorses Nagel’s view when he says “Thomas Nagel made this point years ago by saying that for every conscious state there is something that it is like to be in that conscious state”.

Conscious states have a first person ontology i.e. they exist only from the point of view of some agent or organism or animal or self that has them. This means that: “One consequence of the subjectivity of conscious states is that my consciousness is accessible to me in a way that they are not accessible to you.” There is a sense in which each person’s consciousness is private to that person, a sense in which he is related to his pains tickles, itches, thoughts and feelings. This phenomenon can be described in many ways. It is sometimes described as that feature of consciousness by way of which there is something that it feels like to be in a certain conscious state. Thus conscious states have a certain qualitative character to it which is sometimes described as ‘qualia’.

In order to give an explanation of the conscious phenomenon he takes cue from a commonly acknowledged loophole within Philosophy that it has been trapped in a false dichotomy: on the one hand the world is believed to consist of nothing but

34 Ibid, p.43.
objective particles and on the other hand, consciousness is considered to be a clearly subjective first-person experience. He says that both the sides are true: consciousness is a real subjective experience caused by the physical processes of the brain. According to him consciousness is a biological feature and it means that consciousness and our body (more specifically the brain) are related. What are the relations between consciousness and the brain is the question? This question can be blamed to be the cause of the mind-body problem that has been haunting Philosophy since time immemorial. But Searle dismisses out rightly this so-called fundamental problem of Philosophy when he says that, “Though it has a long and sordid history in both philosophy and science, I think, in broad outline at least, it has a rather simple solution.”

Next, he tries to pin down the specific causes of the mind-body problem and he unhesitatingly admits that the most important reason behind calling the mind-body problem as insolvable is because of the way we use certain words like subjective/objective, physical/mental and so on. It is mainly due to Cartesian tradition we have inherited a vocabulary which has led us to a certain set of categories. The categories have conditioned our thoughts in such a way that we have become accustomed to thinking within these categories regarding everything. The consequence is that due to this categorization a surprising number of theoretical claims have evolved that are almost certainly false. “The vocabulary includes a series of apparent oppositions: “physical” versus ‘mental”, “body” versus “mind”, “materialism” versus “mentalism”, “matter” versus “spirit.” Searle added, “Thus we are supposed to believe that if something is mental, it cannot be physical; that if it is a matter of spirit, it cannot be a matter of matter; if it is immaterial it cannot be material. But these views seem to be obviously false, given everything we know about neurobiology.” According to Searle, revision of the traditional Cartesian definition of both ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ will help us see everything in a new light.

Searle finds Descartes postulation of mind and body as separate spheres leaves no room for consciousness. For Searle, the Cartesian claim that mind and body are

---

36 Ibid. p.182.
two separate entities, only “with the added disadvantage that the hidden structure of consciousness is unknowable in principle,”\textsuperscript{38} is severely outdated and nonsensical. He himself argues for a ‘biological naturalism’ that holds conscious states to be real phenomena in the real world in which mental events are higher level manifestation of systemic neurobiological processes. He calls his solution ‘biological naturalism’ because it provides a naturalistic solution to the mind-body problem, one that emphasizes the biological character of the mental states. It is the brain that causes conscious mental states, and these conscious states are simply higher-level features of the brain. “It is a “higher-level or emergent property of the brain in the utterly harmless sense of “higher-level” or “emergent” in which solidity is a higher level emergent property of H2O molecules when they are in a lattice structure (ice), and liquidity is similarly a higher level emergent property of H2O molecules when they are, roughly speaking, rolling down on each other (water). Consciousness is a mental, and therefore physical, property of the brain in the sense in which liquidity is a property of systems of molecules.”\textsuperscript{39} The fact that a feature is mental does not simply imply that it is not physical and the fact that a feature is physical does not mean that it is not mental. “Revising Descartes for the moment, we might say not only “I think, therefore I am” and “I am a thinking being”, but also I am a thinking being, therefore I am a physical being.”\textsuperscript{40} What he argues here is that one can accept the obvious facts of physics – that the world consists entirely of physical particles in fields of force – without denying that among the physical features of the world are subjective mental phenomena such as inner qualitative states of consciousness and intentionality.

Searle’s analysis of the mind-body problem is brilliant. He argues that all forms of consciousness – from feeling thirsty to being in love are caused by the behavior of neurons and are realized in the brain system, which is itself composed of neurons. But this does not mean that consciousness is nothing but neuronal behavior. The main point of having the concept of consciousness, Searle points out, is to capture the first person subjective features of phenomenon and this point is lost if we redefine consciousness in the third person objective terms. In \textit{Mind: A Brief Introduction}, he

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p.14.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, P.15.
writes, “All forms of consciousness are caused by the behavior of the neurons and are realized in the brain system, which is itself composed of neurons,” but “conscious states, with their subjective, first-person ontology, are real phenomena in the real world. We cannot do an eliminative reduction of consciousness, showing that it is just an illusion. Nor can we reduce consciousness to its neurobiological basis, because such a third-person reduction would leave out the first-person ontology of consciousness.”

There is no reason why a physical system such as a human or animal organism should not have states that are qualitative, subjective, and intentional i.e. focused on something. There are not two metaphysical realms in the skull – one physical and the other mental. Rather, there are just processes going on in the brain and some of them are conscious experiences.

Conscious states are caused by lower level neurobiological processes in the brain and are themselves higher level features of the brain. The key notions to be derived from this fact are those of cause and feature. As far as we know anything about how the world works, variable rates of neuron firings in different neuronal architectures cause all the enormous variety of our conscious life. “All the stimuli we receive from the external world are converted by the nervous system into one medium, namely, variable rates of neuron firing cause all of the color and variety of our conscious life. The smell of the flower, the sound of the symphony, and the thoughts of theorems in Euclidian geometry – all are caused by lower level biological processes in the brain; and as far as we know, the crucial functional elements are neurons and synapses.”

The crucial point he is trying to make is that we are looking for causal relationships. The first step in the solution of the mind-body problem is acceptance of the simple fact that the brain processes causes consciousness. It means accepting the simple truth that the physical can cause the mental.

One question that arises when we concede to the claim that there is a causal relation between brain and consciousness is whether that leads us to commit to a dualism of ‘physical’ things and the ‘mental’ things? The answer according to Searle is a definite no. Problem arises because there is so much confusion surrounding the

---

notions of objectivity and subjectivity. One sense of the objective/subjective distinction is in the context about claims to knowledge. Searle calls this the epistemic sense. A claim is said to be objective if its truth or falsity can be settled as a matter of fact independently of anybody’s attitudes, feelings, or evaluations and in case it is subjective it cannot be settled the same way. For e.g. M.F.Hussain died in London is epistemically objective whereas the claim that M.F.Hussain was a better painter than DeVinci a matter of subjective opinion. In another sense, the objective/subjective distinction is about modes of existence. Searle calls this the ontological sense. An entity is ontologically objective if its existence does not depend on being experienced by human or animal subject; otherwise it is subjective. For example, mountains, molecules, and trees are ontologically objective. Their existence does not depend on being experienced by anybody. But pains, tickles, and itches only exist when experienced by a human or animal subject. They are ontologically subjective.

Searle puts emphasis on these two senses of the distinction between these notions because a common mistake is to suppose that because science is objective and consciousness is subjective and therefore there cannot be a science of consciousness. Science is indeed epistemically objective, because scientific claims are supposed to be verifiable independently of anybody’s feelings and attitudes. On the other hand by nature consciousness is ontologically subjective. But the ontological subjectivity of consciousness does not mean that it cannot be an area of scientific study. The ontological subjectivity of the domain of consciousness does not preclude or make an objective science of that domain impossible. We can without fail have an epistemically objective science of an ontologically subjective consciousness. Searle points out that much confusion has been created by the failure to see through this point.

The next question that comes to our mind is: How can the brain which is ontologically objective give rise to something like consciousness that is ontologically subjectivity by nature? Searle says that we know consciousness happens and we know the brain does it. Regarding question like: ‘How does it work?’ and ‘How do we approach this problem scientifically?’ he says that the standard way is to go through three steps. The first step is to try to find the neurobiological correlate of consciousness. A lot of work has been done on this. The second step is to try to test if
the correlations between them are in fact causally related. Do neurobiological states cause consciousness? The third step is to try to formulate a theory. Why do these processes cause consciousness at all, and why do these specific processes cause these specific conscious states? One of the depressing features of this entire research project is that it does not seem to be making much progress. The slowness of the project makes one wonder if we are, perhaps, proceeding on the basis of wrong assumptions.

Brain processes cause consciousness but the consciousness they cause is not some extra substance or entity. It is just a higher level feature of the whole system. The two crucial relationships between consciousness and the brain, then, can be summarized as follows: lower level neuronal processes in the brain cause consciousness and consciousness is simply a higher level feature of the system that is made up of the lower level neuronal elements.

There are many examples in nature where a higher level feature of a system is caused by lower level elements of that system, even though the higher level feature is not a feature of the system that made it up. Examples of such things are liquidity of water or the transparency of glass or the solidity of a table. Like all analogies these analogies may be imperfect and inadequate in various ways but the important thing that Searle has been trying to make is that there is no metaphysical obstacle to claiming that the relationship between brain and consciousness is one of causation and at the same time claiming that consciousness is just a feature of the brain. “Lower level elements of a system can cause higher level features of that system, even though those features are features of a system made up of the lower level elements. Notice, for example, that just as one cannot reach into a glass of water and pick out a molecule and say ‘This one is wet’, so, one cannot point to a single synapse or neuron in the brain and say ‘This one is thinking about my grandmother’. As far as we know anything about it, thoughts about grandmothers occur at a much higher level than that of the single molecules.”

---

43 John R. Searle, The Problem of Consciousness – Cogsci.esc.soton.ac.uk. in cogsci.soton.ac.uk/~harnad/papers/py 104/searle.prob.html.
We know as a matter of fact that brain processes cause conscious states. We don’t know the details of how it works and it may well be a long time before we understand the details involved. Furthermore, it seems that an understanding of how exactly brain processes can cause conscious states may require a revolution in neurobiology. Given our present explanatory apparatus, it is not all obvious how, within the apparatus, we can account for the causal character of the relation between neuron firings and conscious states. But, at present, from the fact that we do not know how it occurs, it does not follow that we do not know that it occurs. Many people who object to Searle’s solution (or dissolution) of the mind-body problem according to him is objected on the ground that we have no idea how neurobiological processes could cause conscious phenomena. But that does not seem to be a conceptual or logical problem. That is an empirical/theoretical issue for the biological sciences. The problem is to figure out exactly how the system works to produce consciousness, and since we know that in fact it produce consciousness, we have good reason to suppose that there are specific neurobiological mechanisms by way of which it works.

There is a sense of philosophical pessimism we sometimes get into when it seems absolutely astounding that consciousness could be produced by electro-biochemical processes, and it seems almost impossible that we would ever be able to explain it in neurobiological terms. However, it is important to remind ourselves that similar mysteries have occurred before in science. A century ago it seemed extremely mysterious, puzzling, and to some metaphysically impossible that life should be accounted for in terms of mechanical, biological, chemical processes. But now we know that we can give such an account, and the problem of how life arises from biochemistry has been solved to the point that we find it difficult to remember and difficult to understand why it seemed such impossibility at one time. Earlier still electromagnetism seemed mysterious. On a Newtonian conception of the universe there seemed to be no place for the phenomenon of electromagnetism. But with the development of the theory of electromagnetism, the metaphysical worry dissolved. I believe that we are having a similar problem about consciousness now. But once we recognize the fact that conscious states are caused by neurobiological processes, we automatically convert the issue into one for theoretical scientific investigation. If we
are able to accomplish as Searle holds than we will be able to remove it from the realm of metaphysical impossibility.

Searle further suggests some essential features of consciousness which any empirical theory of it should be able to explain. A brief description of them is as follows:

1) **Subjectivity:** Conscious states have a first-person mode of existence and are only as experienced by some agent i.e. by a subject. “One consequence of the subjectivity of conscious states is that my states consciousness is accessible to me in a way that they are not accessible to you.”

A theory of consciousness needs to explain how a set of neurobiological processes can cause a system to be in a subjective state of sentience or awareness. This phenomenon is unlike anything else in biology, and in a sense it is one of the most amazing features of nature. We resist accepting subjectivity as an irreducible phenomenon of nature because we are still fascinated by the seventeenth century objective/subjective divide and have a blindfold believe that the domain of science must be only objective. This is because we confuse the epistemic objectivity of scientific investigation with the ontological objectivity of the typical subject matter in science in disciplines such as Physics and Chemistry. Since science aims at objectivity in the epistemic sense that we seek truths that are not dependent on the particular point of view of this or that investigator, it has been tempting to conclude that the reality investigated by science must be objective in the sense of existing independently of the experiences in the human individual. But this last feature i.e. ontological objectivity is not an essential trait of science. Science which is supposed to give an account of how the world works must also give an account of the subjective states of consciousness because they too form a part of this world. Science must therefore seek an epistemically objective account of the ontologically subjective reality i.e. consciousness. What Searle is trying to say is that we can have an epistemically objective science of a domain that is ontologically subjective.

---

44 John R. Searle, Mind, Language and Society, op. cit., p.43.
2) **Unity:** Consciousness comes to us in unity. We have experiences all occurring simultaneously as a part of one unified conscious experience. Kant called this feature ‘the transcendental unity of apperception’. Recently in neurobiology it has been called ‘the binding problem’. There are at least two aspects of this unity that require special mention. First, at any given instant all of our experiences are unified into a single conscious field. Second the organization of our consciousness extends over more than simple instants. If I begin speaking a sentence, I have to maintain in some sense at least an iconic memory of the beginning of the sentence so that I know what I am saying by the time I get to the end of the sentence.

3) **Intentionality:** It is the name that philosophers and psychologists give to that feature of many of our mental states by which they are directed at or about states of affairs in the world. He defines intentionality “as the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs in the world.” Conscious experience is always from a particular perspective. Therefore, all seeing becomes ‘seeing as’. But there are certain exceptions like in the case of ‘moods’. For e.g. there are states of anxiety or depression where one is not anxious or depressed about anything in particular but just like that is in a bad mood. That is not an intentional state. But if one is depressed about a forthcoming event that is an intentional state because it is directed at something beyond itself.

   There is a conceptual connection between consciousness and intentionality in the following respect. Though many, indeed most, of our intentional states at any given point of time are unconscious, nonetheless, in order for an unconscious intentional state to be genuinely an intentional state it must be accessible in principle to consciousness. It must be the sort of a thing that could be conscious even if it, in fact, is blocked by repression, brain lesion, or sheer forgetfulness.

4) **The distinction between the center and the periphery of consciousness:** At any given moment of non-pathological consciousness I have what might be called a field of consciousness. Within that field I normally pay attention to some things and not to others. So, for example, right now I am paying attention to the problem of

---

describing consciousness but very little attention to the feeling of the shirt on my back or the tightness of my shoes. It is sometimes said that I am conscious of these. But that is a mistake. The proof that they are a part of my conscious field is that I can at any moment shift my attention to them. But in order for me to shift my attention to them, there must be something there which I was previously not paying attention to which I am now paying attention to.

5) **The Gestalt structure of conscious experience:** Within the field of our consciousness our experiences are characteristically structured in a way that goes beyond the structure of the actual stimulus. This was one of the most famous discoveries of the Gestalt psychologists. It is most obvious in the case of vision, but the phenomenon is quite general and extends beyond vision. The disposition of the brain to structure and degenerate stimuli into certain structured forms is so powerful that we will naturally tend to see structure. Not only do we have our conscious experience in certain structures, but we tend to have them as figures against backgrounds. This is most obvious in the case of vision. Thus, when I look at a figure I see it against the background of the page. I see the page against the background of the table. I see the table against the background of the floor, and I see the floor against the background of the room, until we eventually reach the horizon of my visual consciousness.

6) **The aspect of familiarity:** It is characteristic feature of non-pathological states of consciousness that they come to us with the ‘aspect of familiarity’. In order for one to see the objects in front as, for example, houses, chairs, people, tables, one would have to have prior possession of the categories of houses, chairs, people, tables. That means one will have to assimilate experiences into a set of categories which are more or less familiar. When one is in an extremely strange environment, in a jungle village, for example, and the houses, people and foliage look very exotic than still one still can perceive that as a house, that as a person, that as clothing, that as a tree or bush. The aspect of familiarity is thus a scalar phenomenon. There can be greater or lesser degree of familiarity. But it is important to see that non-pathological forms of consciousness come to us under the aspect of familiarity.
7) **Mood:** Part of every normal consciousness is the mood that pervades the experience. It need not be a mood that has a particular name to it, like depression or elation; but there is always what one might call a flavor or tone to any normal set of conscious states. Mood is probably more easily explainable in biochemical terms as we may be able to control, for example, pathological forms of depression by mood-altering drugs.

8) **Boundary Conditions:** Our non-pathological states of consciousness come with a sense of what one might call their ‘situatedness’. Though I am not thinking about it, and though it is not part of the field of my consciousness, I nonetheless know what year it is, what place I am in, what time of the day it is, the season of the year it is and so on. All of these are boundary conditions or the situatedness of non-pathological conscious states. Conscious states are situated and they are experienced as situated even though the details of the situation need not be a part of the content of the conscious states.

After a description of the features that Searle deems essential to be a part of any theory of consciousness, he undertakes a discussion about some of the common mistakes that occur when people refuse to address consciousness on its own terms i.e. try to analyze it by ignoring the essential features of it. The most common among them is to ignore its essential subjectivity and try to treat it as if it were an objective third person phenomenon. Instead of recognizing that consciousness as an essentially subjective, qualitative phenomenon, many people mistakenly suppose that it is essentially a control mechanism or certain kind of sets of dispositions to behavior or a computer program. Among other major mistakes committed in the study of consciousness are the suppositions that it can be analyzed behavioristically or computationally. Searle has strong objections against Behaviorism which tries to explain the mind by saying all conscious states are propensities to some sort of behavior. He insists that there is no logical connection, no necessary connection between inner, subjective, qualitative mental states and the external states which manifest themselves in publicly observable behavior. He also points out the traditional objection to behaviorism that a system could act as if it were conscious without actually being conscious. He does not object to the fact that conscious states
characteristically cause behavior. But at the same time he argues that the behavior they cause has to be distinguished from the states themselves. The same mistake, he says, is repeated by computational account of consciousness that says all thought is just neurons doing computations and running algorithms. It is a grave error of computationalism in supposing that the computational model of consciousness is somehow conscious. He opposes what he calls ‘Strong A.I’ whereby it is assumed that as soon as a certain kind of software is running on a computer, a conscious being is created. The Turing test leads us to this kind of a mistaken belief. It leads us to suppose that for a system to be conscious, it is both necessary and sufficient that it has the right computer program or set of programs with the right inputs and outputs. He refuses to take the computer as a metaphor of the mind i.e. the belief that the mind is nothing but a computer program too literally. The popular argument of his known as the “Chinese room argument” is a strong knock out to ‘Strong AI’ argument and provides a simple demonstration that the computational model of consciousness is not sufficient for consciousness. The Chinese Room shows that a system could pass the Turing test for understanding Chinese, for example, and could implement any program and still not understand a word of Chinese. “Assume you do not speak Chinese and imagine yourself in a room with two slits, a book, and some scratch paper. Someone slides you some Chinese characters through the first slit, you follow the instructions in the book, write what it says on the scratch paper, and slide the resulting sheet out of the second slit. To people on the outside world, it appears that the room speaks Chinese – they slide Chinese statements in one slit and get valid responses in return – yet you do not understand a word of Chinese. This suggests, according to Searle, that no computer can ever understand Chinese or English, because, as the thought experiment suggests, being able to translate Chinese into English does not entail understanding either Chinese or English: all which the person in the thought experiment, and hence the computer, is able to do is to execute certain syntactic manipulations”\(^46\) The Chinese argument answer to the most commonly asked question about consciousness i.e. ‘Is consciousness intrinsically computational?’ is that nothing is intrinsically computational. Computation exists only relative to some agent or observer who imposes a computational interpretation

\(^{46}\) John R. Searle, *Interview at http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Searle-cont4.htm*
on some phenomenon. According to him behaviorism as well as computational theory of the mind is prone to the same kind of mistakes.

The theory of mind currently in vogue with cognitive scientists is known as functionalism. Functionalism is the modern successor to behaviourism and arguably is the most influential position on the mind-body relation today. Functionalism says that mental states are constituted by their causal relations to one another and to sensory inputs and behavioural outputs. It holds that anything that carries out the same information processes as a human is also conscious. He does not agree to the functionalist claim that consciousness can be defined as a set of information processes inside the brain. Searle argues that it is just not possible. Consciousness is a physical property, like digestion or fire. So, no matter how good a simulation of digestion one builds in the computer, it will not be able to digest anything. The simulation of fire on the computer will never be able to burn anything. By contrast, informational processes are observer-relative: observers pick out certain patterns in the world and consider them information processes, but information processes are not ‘things-in-the-world-themselves’ since they do not exist at a physical level. Searle argues that they cannot have causal efficacy and thus cannot be conscious.

He summarizes his position on consciousness in *Mind, Language and Society* as: “Consciousness consists of inner, qualitative, subjective states and processes. It has therefore first-person ontology; because it has a first person ontology, consciousness cannot be reduced to a third-person phenomena in the way that it is typical of other natural phenomena such as heat, liquidity, or solidity; that consciousness is above all a biological phenomenon. Conscious processes are biological processes; that conscious processes are caused by lower-level neuronal processes in the brain; that consciousness consists of higher-level processes realized in the structure of the brain.”\(^47\) We have to keep reminding ourselves that any type of qualitative subjectivity is a form of consciousness. The possession of such states is necessary and sufficient for being conscious. Consciousness comes in degrees, and these range all the way from fanatic intensity to just barely being awake. But all of these are degrees within consciousness. There is no such thing as a ‘hybrid’ form of consciousness.

consciousness. But the present task in the neurobiology of consciousness is to explain exactly how brain processes create consciousness.48

Searle also throws light on the ‘self’ as a problem in philosophy and neurobiology. It is one of three main problems of the contemporary philosophy of mind along with consciousness and freewill. While trying to analyze it he goes back to Descartes’ famous slogan, ‘I think therefore I am’. Searle asks what does the ‘I’ refer to? For Descartes it does not refer to the body. The essence of mind is consciousness, or as he called it “thinking”; and the essence of body is being extended. Searle thinks that Descartes thought of the matter as: in the human case, the body is not conscious. It is only the immortal soul, which is attached to the body that is conscious. We have now good reason to suppose that Cartesian dualism is not philosophically acceptable account of the nature of the mind. But rejecting dualism is not the end of the matter. There is still a serious question left over: What exactly is the self? What fact about me makes me? Searle too like most of his contemporaries until fairly recently thought that Hume had more or less the last word on the issue. In addition to the sequence of experiences, and the body in which these experiences occur, there is no such thing as the self. It was much later that Searle realized that unlike what Hume had held about self there is definitely something that it feels like to be oneself. Though Hume was right that there is no self as the object of our experience or that there is no experience of this entity, that does not mean that we do not have to postulate some such entity or formal principle. There is a formal or logical requirement that we postulate a self as something in addition to the experiences in order that we can make a sense of the character of our experiences. As things turn out, though the ‘self’ is not really an ‘entity’, for then it would have to be a spook, an immaterial ghost. The self, for Searle, turns out to be pretty much the same as our everyday banal conception, a sense that there is a continuing “I” behind our consciousness. The sense of self is thus a product of a certain sort of consciousness, not conversely. Like the sense of freewill, the sense of an “I” goes against the nature of every other substance in the known universe.

But he himself admits that his assumption of the existence of the self does not solve the problem of the concept of self as we are still in dark about its nature. “As far as the argument goes, I am not satisfied with it. But I am very dissatisfied by the fact that it does not seem to me to go far enough, as I do not really know how to complete it... My sense of self definitely exists, but it does not solve the problem of personal identity, and it does not yet so far flesh out the purely formal requirement that I said was necessary to supplement Hume’s account in order to account for the possibility of free rational action...”\(^{49}\) If one understands how profoundly weird the laws of nature are, and if one appreciates how stunningly beautiful and unexpected are the products of evolution, than, one will not have any trouble in accepting Searle’s thesis. Than, there will be no reason to cast the mind out of the realm of the physical, into some other mysterious never-never land. The fact that Physics has not yet been able to explain consciousness does not mean that the mind is something else and not a part of nature. This particular sentence of his says it all. “There is just one world; it is the world we all live in, and we need to account for how we exist as a part of it.”\(^{50}\) This is Searle’s message. It can be summed up that he holds that the body is the originator of consciousness through the process of evolution. There cannot be disembodied consciousness. Consciousness is nothing but a higher level function of the body or more specifically the brain. It is the unity of consciousness that gives us the feeling of self. The sense of self is a product of a certain sense of consciousness and not vice versa. Searle’s view of ‘Self, Consciousness and the Body’ is that all three are intricately entwined to our understanding of ourselves. The body (the brain) gives rise to consciousness and consciousness brings about a sense of self.

Searle’s thoughts are engaging though at times seems vague leaving too many gaps for the readers to fill in. As an analytic philosopher, Searle has been insufficiently analytical in his dealings with several major problems of consciousness. Dennet’s view on Searle seems just apt: “He sees himself as an iconoclast, waging lonely battle against “the tradition”—the “mainstream orthodoxy” of functionalistic materialism that has unjustly captured the flag of the scientific establishment. Unsullied commonsense is his chief ally…..we could try to take seriously the


\(^{50}\) Ibid, p.330.
humbled possibility that Searle has actually underestimated the size of his Herculean task; he is simply right—and the rest of us are so hopelessly in the grip of the pseudo-sophisticated confusions he imputes to us that we are still unable to get our heads around the simple truth that he is trying to remind us of. It can hardly be credited that it was Searle’s intention to leave his philosophical targets with no agreeable alternative to the thesis that we are so disabled. Nevertheless we could try to maintain this well-nigh-incredible (to us, of course!) prospect as a working hypothesis. In fact, I have attempted this. I have reasoned that if he really were right, when I turned to hid positive arguments from as neutral a perspective as I could muster, I would find it surprisingly difficult to find any plausible diagnoses of fallacious argument or overlooked possibilities on his part. But I do find apparent contradictions and major gaps in that positive account...”

4.5 COLIN McGINN

McGinn believes that the mind is indeed a product of the material qualities of the brain but at the same time he argues that the mind (or brain) does not itself possess the ability to solve the “mind-body problem”. He defends the radical view that human beings in principle cannot solve the mystery of consciousness. In his opinion, consciousness has a hidden structure, one which will always be in principle unknowable to human beings. Because consciousness has a structure that is cognitively sealed from human beings, we are incapable of understanding the riddle of the conscious mind. Since the bond between the mind and brain is a deep mystery, creatures with our powers of understanding do not and cannot understand why particular types of brain processes are necessarily connected with particular types of conscious experience. It is an ultimate mystery that the human intelligence will never be able to unravel. It should be noted that he claims consciousness to be a mystery, not a miracle. A mystery is different from that of a miracle. A mystery is a phenomenon that lies beyond the limits of our understanding whereas miracle is an action of a deity that violates a law of nature. He argues that the mystery of the mind-body is merely a reflection of our ignorance. The mind/body connection is not an actual mystery but appears to be so due to our limited faculties.

---

McGinn rejects both traditional materialism and dualism. Materialists propose that the brain and consciousness are one and the same. Brain waves not only correlate with consciousness, they are consciousness. He criticizes this position for ignoring the very nature of the conscious subjective experiences and goes on to argue that conscious experiences do not directly correlate with brain waves. Studying the physical phenomena alone will tell the observer nothing about the experience of consciousness, while endless introspective inspection of one’s conscious state would not lead to any description of the brain’s anatomy or physiology.

McGinn rejects dualism whose proponents according to him ignore empirical observations and holds that consciousness can exist completely independent of the brain. He believes that if consciousness were completely disconnected from the brain like the proponents of dualism say, than, a fully functioning brain could exist without consciousness, and consciousness could exist independent of the brain, thereby producing what he terms as ghosts (disembodied minds) and Zombies (organisms with mindless brains, being who can act but who cannot perceive). Dualism also does not concede to the empirical observations of conscious organisms, in which the consciousness’s existence appears to depend on the brain’s activity, and vice versa.

McGinn offers a third way out of the mind-brain problem, that is, pessimism and acceptance of failure. He concedes with the materialists claim that it is the properties of the brain, and the brain alone, which produces consciousness. However, these properties are unknowable, emerging in their turn from properties of space and matter that the human brain cannot perceive. He postulates a theory known as ‘mysterianism’, a respectable way of saying the world will never know. Regarding the mind-body problem, it is claims that humans are not smart enough to determine the relationship between mind and matter. This viewpoint has been extended by some writers to encompass the wider philosophical position that humans do not have the intellectual ability to solve the hard problems, not just the problem of consciousness, at a scientific level. The proponents of this view argue that their belief that the hard problem is irresolvable is not a presupposition, but is a logical conclusion reached by thinking carefully about the issue. “McGinn argues that in contemplating the origin and nature of consciousness, the human mind has come to the edge of its conceptual
capacity: the mind peers over the cliff, but can see nothing but an endless abyss below. While human intelligence can perceive the problem, it cannot understand the answer.”

Citing logical requirement, intuitive assurance, theoretical necessity, and agreement with empirical findings, he argues that we have no choice but to agree with his theory.

There are a few reasons for the mystery regarding consciousness. His most convincing reason for crediting consciousness with a hidden structure has been inspired by the prominent logicians of a century ago who set an uncannily useful precedent. Frege, Russell, and early Wittgenstein believed that they had to postulate the existence of a hidden structure in order to account for how propositions expressed by sentences in a natural language seem to require something transcendental to explain how they present themselves to us. Because the grammar, the very surface, of logical language did not seem to account for the actual logical relations, it seemed necessary that something also existed beneath the surface, linking the relations to grammar. McGinn believes that such a surface/deep distinction is required in the philosophy of mind. For him, this logic does not merely give him an analogy of the mind; it gives him a blueprint. According to him, “We are like thwarted logicians who know that the surface structure of sentences is inadequate to explain their logical properties but who cannot for the life of them develop the logical concepts needed to account for these properties: They know that a hidden logical structure must exist, since the surface of sentences will not do the job – and there must be an answer to their puzzles.”

He puts forward an interesting theory to demonstrate how mind and body connect. In order to link mind to matter, he claims that we logically need to postulate the existence of the property P in the world, a property “responsible for the capacity of matter to form the basis of consciousness, or for the capacity of consciousness to take its rise from matter.” He believes that we have good reason to think that this logically required property is radically unknowable to us in principle. Because the two radically dissimilar kinds of entity are correlated with one another

---

54 Ibid, p.58.
we cannot understand how the mind can “be physically governed…and yet be so utterly unlike that which governs it.” He claims that the situation must remain for us a mystery. He maintains that by necessity we will never be able to “explain how the chunks of matter can develop a inner life” The logical properties of conscious thoughts force us to believe that there is a connector, but our inability to conceive of what it might be convinces us that it must be permanently hidden. The hidden structure must be vitally linked to consciousness itself, so much so that, in his opinion, the only sensible possibility is that the hidden structure must belong to consciousness. He contends that “conscious states possess a hidden natural (not logical) structure which mediates between their surface properties and the physical facts on which they constitutively depend.” The analytical philosophers of a century ago cut the logical mould, but McGinn’s property P, unknowable and yet responsible for the connection between brain and consciousness, fits it perfectly. To show that we are cognitively closed with respect to P, McGinn distinguishes two possible routes to P, and argues that we are closed with respect to each:

1) **Conscious introspection**: it reveals only the mind part of the mind-brain relation and neither the brain part nor the relation between them. Thus introspection is cognitively closed with respect to P.

2) **The study of the brain**: We do not perceive consciousness when we look at the brain. It is because we cannot form concepts of conscious properties if we cannot have those properties. A blind man cannot form concepts of visual experience. We are limited by the specific sort of consciousness that we have, so we don’t have a general theory of how brains give rise to consciousness. We cannot simply stipulate that our concept forming abilities are unlimited. He holds that our perceptual abilities constrain the sort of concepts we could apply to the study of the brain. The question is whether we perceive P, the property responsible for consciousness. He argues that P is indeed closed to perception and also to inference. In sum, he does not think that P can be arrived at by an empirical study of the brain. Thus, McGinn believes that we are logically compelled to give consciousness a secret underbelly, a property P which

---

55 Ibid, p.100.
56 Ibid, p.104.
accounts for the mind-body connection and which remains unknowable for the humans.

Beyond its logical necessity, he argues that we also have a very good intuitive reason for believing that consciousness has a hidden structure, inaccessible to introspection. Introspection, for McGinn, is the doorway to consciousness. But introspection offers us no information on the consciousness of others, and it certainly tells us nothing about the causal picture behind our different experiences. This weakness is crippling for any theory that holds consciousness to be completely knowable by the subject. To show the inefficiency of introspection, McGinn, cites the example of vision: “The computational processes that underlie vision, rich and complex as they are, are hidden to introspection. This is why the process of seeing something strikes us a lot simpler than it really is.”\(^{57}\) Introspection, thus, does not provide a clear picture of reality and sometimes presents a distorted picture of reality. Introspection no doubt has its own loopholes but at the same time consciousness which is examined through introspection might partially be the culprit. He says “we know that what we introspect of consciousness… is insufficient to explain how consciousness relates to the physical world; so we have reason to think that consciousness has properties that go beyond this mode of access to it.”\(^{58}\) Since introspection is limited, and McGinn thinks that we have good reason to think that it is, it seems reasonable to suppose that consciousness itself has hidden components that are in principle unknowable by us. Nature contains a vast series of hidden structures which make this world behave the way it does, and so postulating a hidden structure within consciousness itself, according to him, seems intuitively natural.

He then goes on to argue that not only a hidden underside of consciousness is logically necessary and intuitively plausible, but also that it performs “an indispensable theoretical role.”\(^{59}\) For McGinn, the surface of consciousness does not provide the answer to our mind-body questions. Only a hidden structure of consciousness can fill the theoretical gap between the mind and body, and hence do us the service of providing a solution to the mind-body problem. Simply put, the surface

---

\(^{57}\) Ibid, p.77.

\(^{58}\) Ibid, p.120.

\(^{59}\) Ibid, p.65.
has not and seems incapable of providing us with an understanding of how the mental and the physical can join. “What we should do is to pause and ask ourselves whether the surface exhausts the reality; for if it does not, then the hidden part might well contain what is needed to keep consciousness glued down to the physical world, where it belongs.” For McGinn his theory at least has the ability to account for the mind-body connection and therefore to play a particularly difficult theoretical role, whereas all competing theories do not have the potential to do so. Perhaps the most intriguing reason for his belief that there is an underside to consciousness is because the best science of ours has compelling empirical evidence for consciousness having a partially hidden structure. Our best science cannot help but conclude that there apparently are two kinds of properties inherent in consciousness: “surface properties, which are accessible to the subject introspectively; and deep properties, which are not so accessible.” The very fact that we can observe in human beings seemingly conscious behavior, even when it is “shorn of its phenomenal surface” is for McGinn extremely persuasive empirical proof that consciousness does have a dark side; one that he believes cannot in principle be uncovered. In his opinion, a hidden structure within consciousness is not only required logically, sound intuitively, and useful theoretically; it is also backed up with convincing empirical evidence.

Descartes famously held that, while the essence of the body is spatial extension, the essence of mind is thought, as that is, what empirical evidences point towards. It is hard to deny that he was tapping into our ordinary understanding of the nature of mental phenomena when he formulated the distinction between mind and body in this way – our consciousness does indeed present itself as non-spatial in character. To ask for spatial properties of consciousness is to commit some sort of category mistake, analogous to asking for the spatial properties of numbers. Spatial occupancy is not (at least on the face of it) the mind’s preferred mode of being. This is connected with the fact that conscious states are not perceived. We perceive, by our various sense organs, a variety of material objects laid out in space, taking up certain volumes and separated by certain distances. We thus conceive of these perceptual

---

60 Ibid, p.108.
61 Ibid, p.111.
objects as spatial entities; perception informs us directly of their spatiality. But conscious subjects and their mental states are not in this way perceptual objects. We do not see or hear or smell them, and do not perceive them as spatially individuated. This holds both for the first-and third-person perspectives. Since we do not observe our own states of consciousness, nor those of others, we do not apprehend these states as spatial. So, our modes of cognition of mental states do not bring them under the kinds of spatial concepts appropriate to perceptual acquaintance. Nor do we think of conscious states as occupying unperceived space, as we think of the unobservable entities of physics. We have no conception of what it would even be to perceive them as spatial entities. Since they are non-spatial they are in principle unperceivable.

Even though consciousness presents itself as non-spatial in character, we take each subject of consciousness to be somewhere in the vicinity of a distinguished body, and we locate conscious events in the approximate neighbourhood of the physical object we call the brain. We certainly do not suppose that I am in some other place than my body, and we locate my thoughts nearer to my head than to my feet. So, it may be said, we do grant at least an elementary sort of spatial characteristics to consciousness. But the big question is how do we make locational judgments about consciousness that we do? It is not by perceiving that conscious events occupy particular places but rather by trading upon certain causal considerations. “Events in particular physical objects are directly causally involved in changes of mental states, and we locate the mental change roughly where those causally proximate physical objects themselves are located. I am where my body is whose physical states bear most directly on my mental states; and my states consciousness are situated in the vicinity of that brain whose activity is most directly implicated in the causal relation controlling my mental life.”

---

one. Considered on their own we do not regard mental events as having location. To allow that consciousness can be roughly located is not to guarantee its spatial predictions. We still have not been able to predict its shape, size, and dimensionality and so on. And this shows that such spatiality as we do allow to mental matters is derivative in nature.

Another argument that McGinn takes help of to show non-spatiality of consciousness is the well-known metaphysical principle that no two material objects of the same kind can occupy the same place at the same time. It is the very nature of space and objects that there should be this kind of necessary exclusion. So, if the essential mark of the spatial is competition for space, as the metaphysical principle records, then the mental lacks that essential feature. In view of the above considerations there is something highly misleading about the popular suggestion that mental phenomena have the same sort of conceptual status as that of physical science as both of them are unobservable to our sense data. But there is a crucial disanalogy here. While we think of the unobservables discussed in Physics as existing in space and hence in spatial relation to the things we do observe, we do not think of the mental states that explain the behavior in this way. It is puzzling how they relate to behavior, especially causally, than is the relation of atomic events to the macroscopic behavior of material bodies. In the physical case, we have notions of contact causation and gravitational force acting across space, but in the mental case it is quite unclear how these causal paradigms are supposed to apply. Than how do conscious events cause physical changes in the body? Obviously it is not by means of proximate contact and also apparently not by action-at-a-distance either. Deep down we know consciousness isn’t just extended matter in space, but our modes of thought drag it in that direction, producing much philosophical confusion. We represent the mental by relying upon our folk theory of space and not because the mental itself has a nature that craves such mode of representation. Recent philosophy has become accustomed to the idea of the mental causation, but this is actually much more mysterious than is generally appreciated, once the non-spatial character of consciousness is acknowledged. The standard analogy with physical unobservables simply dodges these hard questions, lulling us into a false sense of intelligibility.
McGinn, after giving his reasons for not complying with either dualism or materialism, presents his third option. It is that the brain cannot simply have the spatial properties recognized in current physical science, since these are insufficient to explain what it can achieve, namely the generation of consciousness. The brain must have aspects that are not represented in our physical world-view, aspects we deeply do not understand, in addition to all those neurons and electro-chemical processes. There is, on this view, a radical incompleteness in our view of reality, including physical reality. In order to provide an explanation of the emergence of consciousness we would need a conceptual revolution, in which fundamentally new properties and principles are identified. This may involve merely supplementing our current theories with new elements, so that we need not abandon what we now believe; or it may be that some profound revisions are required. Consciousness is an anomaly in our present world-view, and like all anomalies it calls for some rectification. We do not know whether the problem of consciousness requires revisions in neurophysiology alone, or whether those revisions will upset broader reaches of physical theory. The non-spatiality of consciousness presents a prima facie problem for our system of thought: how do we think about consciousness at all? It seems to be impossible. This is what leads McGinn to suggest the possibility of some problems which may simply exceed our cognitive competence: “Our knowledge constitutes a kind of ‘best fit’ between our cognitive structure and the objective world; and it fits better in some domain rather than the others. The mind is an area of relatively poor fit. Consciousness occurs in objective reality in a perfectly naturalistic way; it is just that we have no access to its real inner constitution. Perhaps surprisingly, consciousness is one of the more knowledge-transcendent constituents of reality. It must not be forgotten that knowledge is the product of a biological organ whose architecture is fashioned by evolution for brutally pragmatic purposes.”

Consciousness tests the adequacy of our spatial understanding. It marks the place of a deep lack of knowledge about space, which is hard even to get into focus. No doubt it is difficult to accept that two of the things with which we are most familiar might harbor such intractable obscurities. Irony being a mark of truth, however, we should take seriously the

The story of the origin of consciousness, according to McGinn, also supports the mystery of consciousness. He holds that “There was a time at which the universe contained no consciousness but only matter in space obeying the laws of physics. Then the evolution of life began and matter started clumping together in novel ways, driven by the mechanism of natural selection. Soon, in cosmic time, neural nuclei appeared, leading to brains of various sizes and structures – and along with that (as we think) came consciousness. Evidently, then, matter fell into every complex and ingenious arrangements and as a result consciousness came into the world. The only ingredients in the pot when consciousness was cooking were particles and fields laid out in space, yet something radically non-spatial got produced. On that fine spring morning when consciousness was first laid on nature’s table there was nothing around but extended matter in space, yet now a non-spatial stuff simmered and bubbled. We seem compelled to conclude that something essentially non-spatial emerged from something purely spatial – that the non-spatial is somehow a construction out of the spatial. And this looks more like magic than a predictable unfolding natural law.”

There is no doubt that brain states cause consciousness. The analogy with life also suggests this. We know that life evolved from non-living matter, so there must be some explanation of how this happened. Consciousness is a further biological development, so there must also be some explanation of it – whether or not humans are capable of finding it. So, there’s some property P by virtue of which the brain is conscious but what that property P is, remains a mystery.

The primary argument he uses to support his point about the mystery of consciousness is the concept of cognitive closure. He holds that “a type of mind is cognitively closed to some property P if its concept-forming procedures do not extend to P.” Human intelligence, he argues, evolved in response to the environment in which humans had to survive and certain human capacities developed quite well with time. However, some other capacities remain undeveloped or nonexistent: for

---

example, the human brain cannot perceive radar or infrared, or understand a whale song. The ability to understand consciousness is belongs to the latter category. Consciousness is simply not, he argues one of human brain’s talents. McGinn argues that although consciousness appears to be immaterial, it is created by and in turn affects matter. Therefore, he reasons, consciousness must depend upon properties of matter imperceptible to the human brain and inaccessible to the mind. He acknowledges that the key to consciousness is located in every sentient organism’s genes, because genes provide the code for the construction of all biological phenomena, including consciousness. Yet, he maintains that human intelligence as it is currently constructed can not unlock this code.

Many philosophers and scientist have undertaken this journey before him, but McGinn contends that this long road of philosophical inquiry is actually a blind alley. He thinks that there is a perfectly natural cause for consciousness but that we are cut off from knowing what it is. He holds that with regard to the problem of consciousness it is cognitively closed to us. Once we realize why consciousness seems mysterious, the philosophical problem of consciousness will disappears and we will realize that there is nothing miraculous about it. Although he is pessimistic about a scientific or constructive solution to the mind-body problem, he is optimistic about the solving the philosophical problem of consciousness. He concedes that we do not need to solve the scientific puzzle in order to remove the philosophical one.

After a glimpse at his take on consciousness, let us try to understand his take on the concept of self. Amongst the contemporary philosophers, McGinn is one who makes an attempt to evaluate the concept of the ‘self’ besides his array into the domain of consciousness to solve the eternal problem of the mind/body. He deeply delves into understanding the concept of ‘self’ and in the process displays the connection between self, consciousness and the body. This connect is displayed when he employs the personal identity test to understand what the self is all about. Here is McGinn’s account of what the self is all about.

The ‘self’ according to him is the subject of mental phenomena – the entity to which we ascribe sensations, perceptions, thoughts, desires, and actions. A self is
bound up with self-consciousness as without self-consciousness the mind of a creature has no more unity than that conferred by its body. He advocates the view that bodily identity does not necessarily guarantee the identity of the self. In order to be a ‘self’ it requires consciousness of self as the characteristic unity of the self cannot exist without the unifying and integrating power of self awareness. Self proper cannot be antecedent to consciousness of itself as they are intrinsically entwined with each other. The self is the subject of self-reflexive thought and is dependent on self-consciousness. Possession of mental states does not necessarily mean being a self. To be a self, the utmost important thing is to have a unity of awareness about the mental states. It might have a body or be just psychological states. The self is different from any biologically based classification or the body. Self-consciousness is the essence of what it requires to be a ‘self’ whereas the body depends on empirical sciences to disclose what designated group it belongs to. The concept of the self is not dependent on its biological grouping or body. The basis of an ascription of selfhood is manifest in the first-person awareness any person has of himself/herself.

According to McGinn, the possession of the selfhood is an all-or-nothing matter – one either has it or does not. This can be derived from the special kind of unity in a creature’s mental life which the self confers. We feel from the inside that mental states either belong to a unitary thing or they do not – they could not fall between being unified and being fragmented. The unity of self is the unity conferred by self-consciousness, and this unity cannot come in grades. In Philosophy, there are generally three main doctrines regarding the nature of the self. They are the ones that identify the self with the body, that which identify the self in terms of various mental relations and that which takes the concept of the self to be primitive and inexplicable.

McGinn examines each of them in order to know the true nature of the self. He assesses the three theories of the self using the criterion of personal identity. The question of personal identity means – under what conditions a person may be said to exist over time? How do we judge that the person we see before us is the same person we saw last week? What such identity over time consists of in a person? Testing the self using the criterion of ‘personal identity’, he believes, will shed light on the ‘self’. It will reveal to us the qualities which must persist for the survival of the self.
According to McGinn, one good way to know personal persistence is to employ the survival test i.e. the question: if that happened to me, would I survive? If one would survive after the change than the change cannot be regarded as a necessary condition of survival or personal identity, but if the change causes the cessation of the self, than, that particular change or factor is essential to personal identity. “The method is to see what can be conceptually detached from a self and that self endure; this, it is hoped, will isolate the essential core of the person from the inessential accompaniments.”

1) Theories which identify the self with the body: According to this theory personal identity is the identity of the body or continuity of the same body in time. But McGinn does not agree to this. He says that another person may have similar body but that does not make the two identical. If my brain is transplanted to another’s body than I continue to exist not the body of the other person. This is relevant only in case of brain transplantation as we believe that the brain preserves a person’s point of view on himself. So, the existence of self is not dependent on the existence of the body.

2) Theories which identify the self in terms of various mental relations: According to this theory personal identity is a matter of certain sorts of relation between mental states: We say that A is the same person as B if and only if the mental states of A bear these identity conferring relations to the mental states of B. This identity can be as across time or at a given time. Question is what relations will serve this purpose in the case of personal identity – exact or causal? Exact relation is not necessary because a single person may change psychologically over time and it is not sufficient because numerically distinct persons may be psychologically similar. Causal theory can be called ‘mental connectedness theory’ of personal identity. This is a truly reductionist theory as it reduces self to various mental states and their relations. Is mental connectedness, then, – a) necessary b) sufficient or c) circular argument for the existence of personal identity of the “self”?

To show that mental connectedness is not a necessary condition of personal identity, we need a case where there is survival of self without mental connectedness.

---

One case we can cite is that of amnesia. We need to distinguish two sorts of cases here – 1) the case in which totally dissimilar mental attributes is introduced after the amnesia. 2) Case in which they are precisely similar. In case of (2) it is quite possible for ‘self’ to survive as this mental discontinuity is not equal to death. In this case, after amnesia, suppose, in a split second, or qualitatively identical set is introduced in place of the old ones. There is no causal connection between the two of them. At the blink of eyes the operation will be over. It is quite possible that one will survive the operation and this mental discontinuity is not equal to death. So, if the ‘self’ survives even after mental discontinuity than we can say that mental connectedness is not a necessary condition of personal identity.

With regard to the first case whereby totally dissimilar mental states are replaced after amnesia, we have to see whether the ‘self’ sustains or not. To give answer to this question it seems necessary to distinguish between the concept of the ‘self’ and the concept of a ‘person’. Generally we treat both the concepts as interchangeable. There is a strong inclination to say that one would be a different person after the replacement, because sameness of person seems to require some degree of psychological continuity; radical change of personality sometimes makes us want to say that we no longer have the same person. But it does not follow that a new self, that is, a new subject of consciousness would come to occupy the body when the replacement was complete. In this case we are inclined to think that we have the same person in the sense of the same self, but we may also take the sameness of person to connote similarity of personality etc. and then we are inclined to judge that we have a different person. The ordinary notion of sameness of person thus seems to comprise two conditions. A is the same person as B if and only if 1) A is the same self or subject as B. 2) A is sufficiently psychologically similar to B. Here in this case the first condition is met but the second is not. So, because of this complexity it is better for our purpose to employ the notion of the self; this notion corresponds more exactly to the subject of mental attributes themselves in the way the notion of a person does. So, we can say that the ‘self’ would survive even in this case. This leads to the conclusion that causal connectedness and mental similarity taken together are not necessary to personal identity over time.
The next question is – Is mental connectedness or causal connectedness sufficient for personal identity? The idea of causal connection of mental states needed to preserve personal identity cannot be defined properly. Another problem about sufficiency is that it requires something over and above mental connectedness for the survival of the self. It is hard to clarify this intuition but the intuition suggests that it is in principle impossible to construct a ‘self’ from relations between mental states because something crucial is always omitted (we are not able to identify what is that which is omitted). This failure is different from the criteria of mental objects.

McGinn points out that here we encounter a circular argument. We have throughout been taking the concept of self or person to be analogous with that of the brain but in this case the problem of circularity arises. According to him the terms ‘person or self’ and ‘brain’ cannot be used interchangeably. He points out some reasons for not considering them as one. They are: a) It is difficult to find out the relations of brain and self. b) Self may have the same kind of brain or it might not have it altogether. c) There is no necessity for self to have the kind of brain it has. Our conception of the individuality and persistence of self is independent of the ontological states associated with the brain. Brain is physical and ‘self’ is to be taken from the first person perspective. The death of the ‘self’ does not mean the death of the brain. So, explanation of self in terms of the brain leads to circularity of argument.

So, neither the body theory nor the mental relations theory is able to explain the concept of self satisfactorily: “all it shows is that the ‘self’ is a primitive concept – that the self is what it is and not some other thing. The only proposal that clearly meets the survival test is just that the future person be the same person as you; nothing else really adds up to this, and this can hold when all else is lacking.”68 He thus says that the “‘Self’ is a simple substance whose essential nature can be captured only in non-reductive terms.”69 So, self or personal survival is a matter of identity of simple substratum over time.

But there are a few challenges to this view. McGinn takes a plunge into them and tries to figure out if they are challenges in the real sense. The first is the challenge

68 Ibid, p.115.
69 Ibid
posed by fission: If parts of the same brain are separated and placed in different bodies we cannot claim that the resulting persons are identical with the original. If we hold that fission is not death than we have to agree that there can be personal survival without identity. The next is the challenge posed by fusion: Again, if we do not regard fusion (where parts of different brains are preserved and joined to make it one), as death, then we have to agree that again personal survival is possible without identity. The challenges leads him to the conclusion that in case of both fission and fusion there is survival but no identity because part cannot be identical to the whole. The idea of brain fusion and fission are derived from the concept of fission and fission of plants. As far as plants are concerned there can be survival without identity contrary to what we hold about the concept of ‘self’.

According to McGinn the comparison of the self to a non-personal entity as plant is questionable. Also it raises the question whether it is legitimate to take the brain and the person as one and the same. Causal connectedness and psychological similarity have failed to explain personal survival. But taking persons as brains have been successful in its endeavor to explain personal survival without identity. That is if we are take Self = Brain = Plant as something which is divisible into parts than parts do survive. But what he finds problematic is that the idea that ‘self’ like plants has self-like parts. “Ordinarly we regard the self as a simple and hence indivisible substance, not as a composite of selves or potential selves: our pre-theoretical notion of the self does not represent it as a compound or complex of self-like entities. So, if we are to go along the fission and fusion cases, and the thesis about survival they are invoked to demonstrate, it looks as if we must revise our ordinary conception of the constitution of the self; it is not the kind of being we had taken it to be.” But if we want to stick to our ordinary conception of the self then we must agree that the resulting selves after fission and fusion cases are quite new selves, not made up of parts of old selves. Fission and fusion may seem possible from the third person perspective but from the first person perspective it seems an impossible way of understanding the sort of being a self is. It is because a single unitary point of being

---

70 Ibid, p.118.
which the characteristic mark of the notion of self is, cannot project itself into two such distinct and separate points of view.

So, McGinn points out that there appears to be a collision of the two views on self i.e. the ordinary naive view of self and the view of self which is an outcome of fission and fusion cases. But clash happens only in case we take the ‘self’ to be something personal. There is no question of such a clash in the view of non-personal cases of survival without identity. When we take self as non-personal, the question of fission and fusion does not arise at all.

The arguments against fission and fusion shows that there can be no survival of the ‘self,’ if we take it in the ordinary sense of the term with regard to cases involving brain division. Yet, in such times one would definitely tend to prefer brain division rather than death without paying any heed to the puzzle regarding concept of the self as to how it can survive in two or more parts. This collision of view occurs because we tend to take ‘self’ in two ways: 1) ordinary psychological sense and 2) from the point of view of the physical basis of the self. It leads to the general problem of reconciling the context of our mental concepts with the fact of the physical involvement of the mental and this is not an easy one. It is one problem that human beings have been encountering in several other aspects since the time of the inception of our thought processes and is still in the grip of it. According to McGinn, “What is significant is that the two sets of considerations issue from different ways of approaching the self – from the view point of the ordinary psychological concept of self, and from the point of view of the physical basis of the self. Viewed in this way the antimony about the conditions of personal survival is a special case of the general problem of reconciling the content of our mental concepts with the fact of the physical involvements of the mental. The simplicity of the self is analogous in this respect to the subjectivity of sensations: our sensation concepts tell us that sensations are subjective in a way no merely physical state could be, yet we also believe that sensations must in some way depend upon physical properties of the brain – so we get a clash between two ways of thinking about sensations. Similarly our concept of the self tells us it is a simple substance, but we also believe the self to depend upon the brain, which is a complex divisible substance: thought of mentally, the self cannot be
divided, but when we think of it physically we seem compelled to suppose that this simplicity is in some way illusory. The choice therefore seems to be between deciding to ignore, however unreasonably, considerations drawn from the physical facts about the brain, on the one hand, and deciding to abandon or radically revise our conception of the self in the light of those facts, on the other. Neither decision can be taken in good conscience; so we are reduced to looking the antimony in the face and despairing of a satisfying resolution.\textsuperscript{71} At times like this it seems that we have to abandon one of the views to avoid clash. Neither side can be taken in good conscience. So, we are left with despair. But McGinn concedes that “there are occasions on which despair is to be preferred to concealing the troubling facts and so preventing full recognition of their import. The right response to brain fission and fusion cases, it would seem, is first to point out that the claim of survival without identity requires us to conceive the self in a way we in fact do not and whose coherence is dubious; then to acknowledge the force of the cases that have these rebarbative implications, thus admitting an antimony in our ways of thinking about the self; and to diagnose the antimony as arising from the difficulty of coordinating the distinctive character of the mind with the fact of its physical involvements, withholding final judgment pending some resolution of that general problem.”\textsuperscript{72}

The conception of the self has seemed to escape all other explanations and therefore with no choice left we are inclined to operate with the naïve view, holds McGinn. Because of shortage of arguments to dismiss the naïve views on self, we are driven to the conclusion that the self should be conceived as a simple mental substance whose identity over time is primitive and irreducible. Fission and fusion cases do pose challenge to our ordinary naive view on self and leads us to conclude that may be this notion is not, after all coherent; but it is the notion we have, and any philosophical account of the self has as its first duty the elucidation of that notion. The ordinary conception of the self seems to have the following interrelated properties that it is:

1) Simple indivisible substance.

2) Not ontologically reducible (fission and fusion).

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, p.121.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid
3) It is either present or absent and cannot be an in-between case.

4) Survival is not a matter of degree.

5) Mental concept is revealed in the first person perspective of ‘I’.

6) Its identity over time cannot be given non-trivial criteria.

These properties are connected in various ways. But the most fundamental concept of self is that it is a simple substance apprehended as such in self-consciousness. This explains according to McGinn why the self is irreducible and why we cannot give informative criteria of identity for it, and also why there really cannot be a partial survival of a self.

McGinn’s exposition of the mind-body problem is an intelligent and readable summary of the centuries of philosophical debate regarding it. He gives an account of what consciousness is and then goes on to explain the concept of the self. Consciousness and self are intrinsically entwined according to him. There cannot be an existence of the self without it being conscious. In fact unity of consciousness is the primary condition of being a self. Regarding the relationship between consciousness and the body he says that “we take each subject of consciousness to be somewhere in the vicinity of a distinguished body, and we locate conscious events in the approximate neighborhood of the physical objects we call the brain.”

He asserts that “Consciousness indubitably exists, and it is connected to the brain in some intelligible way, but the nature of this connection eludes us.” Due to cognitive closure we are not able to know exactly what consciousness is all about i.e. the predictions of shape, size, dimensionality of it and so. He thoroughly examines the reasons for this closure in order to uncover the deep reasons for our bafflement. He agrees to the evolutionary emergence of consciousness but at the same time holds that “in case of consciousness the Darwinian explanation does not tell us what we need to know, for the simple reason that it is unclear how matter can be so organized as to

create a conscious being.” It looks as if consciousness is a new kind of reality that has been injected into the universe, instead of just a recombination of the old realities. The astonishing leap in the natural process from clump of cells to something throbbing with consciousness is an obscure process. It seems as if the impossible has occurred as unconscious physical particles have conspired to generate conscious minds. Thomas Huxley captured this sense of miracle beautifully when he asked – How is that anything as remarkable as a state of consciousness comes about as a result of irritating nervous tissue, is just as unaccountable as the appearance of the djinn when Aladdin rubbed his lamp in the story? Electrochemical reactions do not generally result in subjective experience, yet in the case of our brains they seem to. It is all very puzzling, very puzzling indeed according to McGinn.

Searle is of the opinion that the way McGinn postulates a hidden structure simply gets us no where. One might even be inclined to say that assuming an unknown property P as McGinn does to solve the mind-body problem is in reality like avoiding the problem. Certainly his theory is no less puzzling than the original situation and we can say that it is even worse because it is recommended as a solution. Rather than solving the mystery McGinn’s proposal actually helps the original mystery to remain a mystery. The property P suggested by him does not fill the theoretical gap, but instead only labels it. McGinn never quite proves the point he tries to make. The concept of cognitive closure that he very often talks about is no doubt intuitively appealing and supported by empirical observation. However, he is not able to clearly explain why consciousness will always remain beyond human understanding. Toward the end all we can do is to ask McGinn as to how can we know that we cannot know something? If human intelligence is cognitively closed to understanding consciousness than how can human intelligence ever deduce this? Again just accepting his proposition of cognitive closure does not necessarily lead us to a well reasoned conclusion. But it seems McGinn on the contrary thinks that by pointing us the cognitive closure he is actually doing us a favor. We need no longer waste our time trying to solve the mind/body problem. And we need not superstitiously invoke miracles to address it.

4.6 DAVID CHALMERS

Chalmers is best known for his articulation of the hard problem of consciousness. He like most of his contemporaries admits that consciousness poses the most baffling problem in the science of mind. He offers a convincing analysis of the mind-body debate and lays out a major new theory of consciousness, one that rejects the prevailing reductionist’s trend of science but is still compatible with scientific view of the world. One of the main focus of his analysis is the distinction between brain biology and mental experiences known as qualia. He argues for the irreducibility of the experience of awareness to purely physical processes and does not concede to the reductive explanations prevalent. He believes that materialist explanations cannot account for the existence of consciousness and convincingly establishes that contemporary cognitive science and neuroscience has not been able to explain how subjective experience emerges from neural processes in the brain. His theory of consciousness is based on the natural world, but he proposes that consciousness has both physical and non-physical properties and advances his own dualistic theory of consciousness making him one of the few remaining dualists left in the philosophical world. He advocates a distinction between easy problems of consciousness, which are things like finding the neural correlates of sensation or more precisely the objective aspects of consciousness, and the hard problem, which could be phrased in Nagel’s terminology ‘what it is like to be’ or the subjective aspects of consciousness. He holds that there is an ‘explanatory gap’ from the objective to the subjective. Consciousness according to him is a fundamental property ontologically autonomous of any known (or even possible) physical properties, and he suggests that a set of ‘psychophysical’ laws are needed to explain why and how of consciousness and determine which physical systems are associated with which types of qualia. In support of his argument for explaining the impossibility of reducing subjective experience of consciousness to the existing physical laws, he is famous for his commitment to the logical possibility of philosophical zombies which is a hypothetical person in all respects identical to the real one but sans qualia. Chalmers argues that since such zombies are conceivable to us, they must therefore be logically possible. And since they are logically possible, qualia and sentience cannot be fully explained by physical properties alone. He proposes that conscious experience must instead be understood in a new light – as an
irreducible entity (like such physical properties as mass, time and space) that exist at a fundamental level and cannot be understood as the sum of simpler physical parts. He sets out on a quest for a fundamental theory – a theory of the basic laws governing the structure and character of conscious experience – and shows how this reconception of the mind could lead us to a new science of consciousness.

Since Descartes, the dilemma has been the question about the communication between the mind and the body. Chalmers changes the scope of the mind body problem by enlarging the ‘body’ to include the brain and its cognitive processes and by restricting ‘mind’ to conscious experience. ‘Body’ extends to the brain, and the brain is responsible for many phenomena that we consider as mind and that are no more mysterious than the movement of a hand. According to him if within the Cartesian dichotomy, ‘body’ is not enlarged to encompass brain processes and ‘mind’ is not restricted to conscious experience than most of the mystery is not a mystery at all. The way ‘mind’ remembers or learns is no more mysterious than the way a muscle gets stronger or weaker. What is mysterious is that ‘remembering’ and ‘learning’ are sometimes associated with conscious experience. That is the real puzzle: how does a brain process of remembering (that is ultimately an electrochemical process of neurons triggering each other) communicate with our conscious life of feelings and emotions that seems to be located in a completely different dimension? Cognition migrates to the body. Consciousness on the other hand, is a truly different substance, or, better, a different set of properties, and just cannot be explained by the natural laws of physical sciences. The study of consciousness requires a different set of laws just because consciousness is due to a different set of properties. The paradox to be explained is not that body and mind communicate but that cognition and consciousness communicate. The bottom line is that Chalmers believes consciousness can be explained by studying nonphysical properties of matter, and that the mind-body problem must be recast as a cognition-consciousness problem.

It is in The Conscious Mind that he separated the study of cognition from the study of consciousness, pushing cognition into the ‘body’ part or more specifically the ‘brain’ part of the body-mind debate. It also introduced Chalmers’ claim that a science of consciousness is possible, but it will be something very different from Physics.
Neuroscience can explain the processes that originate conscious experience (Nagel’s “what it is like to be”\textsuperscript{76}), but cannot explain the conscious experience itself. Those processes simply prescribe how inputs affect the structure of the brain and yield some outputs as there is a systematic co-relation between those processes and conscious experience, but one cannot be reduced to the other. Chalmers believes that science needs to expand its ontology the same way that Physics had to expand its ontology in order to accommodate the theory of electromagnetism (which cannot be reduced to, say, gravitation). He takes cue from evidences like in the nineteenth century when it turned out that electromagnetic processes could not be explained in terms of the wholly mechanical processes by “reducing” it to the known properties of matter that previous physical theories appealed to. It was then that physicists introduced a whole new set of properties and related laws like electromagnetic charges and electromagnetic forces as new fundamental components of a physical theory as these new basic properties and basic laws were needed to give a satisfactory account of the phenomena. By the same token, consciousness though is a fundamental feature of the universe, cannot be explained by the physical laws of the known properties of matter. Chalmers offered a rigorous proof that consciousness cannot be reduced to the physical like in the case of electromagnetism and therefore requires an expansion that would recognize conscious experience as fundamental. He believes that the analogy from electromagnetism might be a way to explain consciousness and it will take a whole different (non-reductive) approach which he names as ‘psychophysical laws’ to explain consciousness. Consciousness supervenes naturally on the physical and so only ‘psychophysical laws’ will be able to explain this supervenience as to how conscious experience depends on the physical processes. His parallel with electromagnetism is powerful. Chalmers emphasizes that this applies only to consciousness and not cognition as unlike consciousness, cognition is governed by the known laws of the physical sciences.

He holds that while investigating the conscious phenomena the very first step is to analyze the many different aspects associated with it. Each of the aspects needs to be explained but as we try to do so we will realize that some of them are easier to explain

\textsuperscript{76} Thomas Nagel, op. cit., p. 445.
than others. According to him it will be useful to divide the associated problems of consciousness into ‘hard’ and ‘easy’ problems. The easy problems of consciousness are those that can be or has the probability to be explained by the standard methods of cognitive science in terms of computational or neural mechanisms. The hard problems are those that seem to resist these methods. According to Chalmers, “The easy problems of consciousness include those of explaining the following phenomena: the ability to discriminate, categorize and react to environmental stimuli; the integration of information by a cognitive system; the reportability of mental states; the ability of a system to access its own internal states; the focus of attention; the deliberate control of behavior; the difference between wakefulness and sleep.”

The easy problems are called easy because they concern the explanation of cognitive abilities and functions. Although the easy problems are called ‘easy’ that does not mean easy in the literal sense but refers to the fact that there is a probability of their being tractable using cognitive and neuroscientific models of explanations. Presently, most of the ‘easy’ problems constitute the most interesting unsolved problems in the cognitive science. But to explain them all we need is to specify a mechanism that can perform the function as it is possible to explain all these phenomena by an appropriate cognitive or neurophysiological model. If it had been the case that only the easy problems constituted the problems of consciousness, then it would not be much of a problem. He adds that “Although we do not yet have anything close to a complete explanation of these phenomena, we have a clear idea of how we might go about explaining them. That is why I call these problems the easy problems.”

Getting details right might take even a century or more but there is enough reason to believe that the methods of cognitive science and neuroscience will not let us down.

Chalmers is perhaps most famous for the ‘hard problem’ of consciousness, “...I find myself absorbed in an orange sensation, and something is going on. There is something that needs explaining, even after we have explained the process of discrimination: there is the experience.” The actual problem in explaining consciousness is this hard problem of conscious experience. The subjective aspect as

Nagel had put it that there is something like to be a conscious organism is what the hard problem of consciousness is about according to him. Chalmers endorses Nagel’s views when he says that “If any problem qualifies as the problem of consciousness, it is this one. In this central sense of “consciousness”, an organism is conscious if there is something it is like to be that organism, and a mental state is conscious if there is something it is like to be in that state. Sometimes terms such as “phenomenal consciousness” and “qualia” are also used here, but I find it more natural to speak of “conscious experience” or simply “experience.”

The hard problem is hard precisely because it is not a problem about the performance of functions and persists even when the performance of all the relevant functions is explained thoroughly. By function is meant any causal role in the production of behavior that a system might perform. The perplexing thing is that we fail to understand in terms of the functional explanations of the existing cognitive system as to how a conscious organism is subject to sets of various experiences. It is widely agreed that experience arises from a physical basis, but we have no good explanation of why and how it so arises. Why should physical processing give rise to a rich inner life at all? It seems objectively unreasonable that it should, and yet it does. According to Chalmers the difficulty to tackle the hard problem of consciousness is what leads philosophers and scientists writing on consciousness to propagate views like consciousness is something mysterious, inexplicable etc. while noting the strange intangibility and ineffability of subjectivity, and worrying that so far we have no theory of the phenomenon. Regarding the division between the easy and hard problems he adds “…This might be seen as a Great Divide in the study of consciousness. If you hold an answer that the “easy” problems explain everything that needs to be explained, then you get one sort of theory; if you hold that there is a further “hard” problem then you get another.”

Based on his distinction between the easy and the hard problems of consciousness he categorizes between the conscious experiences, that he calls the ‘phenomenal properties of the mind’, and the mental states that cause behavior, that he calls the ‘psychological properties of the mind’. He says “At the root of all this lie two quite distinct concepts of mind. The first is the phenomenal concept of mind. This

---

80 The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness, op. cit., p. 226.
is the concept of mind as conscious experience, and of a mental state as a consciously experienced mental state…The second is the psychological concept of mind. This is the concept of mind as the causal or explanatory basis for behavior.”82 Phenomenal states deal with the first-person aspect of the mind, whereas psychological states deal with the third-person aspect of the mind. These two sets can be studied separately. It turns out that psychological properties (such as learning and remembering) have been and are studied by a multitude of disciplines, and in fashion not too different from physical properties of matter (given their ‘causal’ nature), and there is in fact nothing mysterious about our cognitive faculties, such as learning and remembering: they can be explained by the physical sciences the same way they explain physical phenomena. On the other hand phenomenal properties constitute the ‘hard’ problem. A psychological property causes some behavior, no less than most material properties. A phenomenal property is a fuzzier object altogether.

In order to explain the conscious phenomenon Chalmers presents his own theory of consciousness which he calls ‘naturalistic dualism’ (but might as well have called ‘naturalistic monism’). It is a variant of what is known as ‘property dualism’: there are no two substances (mental and physical), there is only one substance, but that substance has two separate sets of properties, one physical and mental. He says “The dualism here is instead a kind of property dualism: conscious experience involves properties of an individual that are not entailed by the physical properties of that individual. Consciousness is a feature of the world over and above the physical features of the world. This is not to say that it is a separate “substance”; the issue of what it would take to constitute a dualism of substances seems quite unclear to me. All we know is that there are properties of individuals in this world – the phenomenal properties – that are ontologically independent of physical properties.”83 Conscious experience is due to mental properties. The physical sciences have studied only the physical properties. The physical sciences study macroscopic properties like ‘temperature’ that is due to microscopic properties such as the physical properties of particles. He advocates a science that studies the ‘protophenomenal properties’ of microscopic matter that can yield the macroscopic phenomenon of consciousness. His

82 Ibid, p.11.
83 Ibid, p.125.
belief that there are features of the world over and above the physical features is supported by the following arguments against materialism:

1) In our world there are conscious experiences.
2) There is a logically possible world physically identical to ours, in which the positive facts about consciousness of our world do not hold.
3) Therefore facts about consciousness are further facts about our world, over and above the physical facts.
4) So materialism is false.

Consciousness is over and above the physical laws and hence we require a new set of ‘psychophysical’ laws that deal with its ‘protophenomenal properties’. Consciousness supervenes naturally on the physical: the ‘psychophysical’ laws will explain this supervenience; they will explain how conscious experience depends on physical processes. Chalmers emphasizes that this applies only to consciousness. Cognition is governed by the known laws of the physical sciences. To substantiate his argument that subjective experiences are beyond the realm of physics whereas cognitive experiences can be explained by physical laws, he proposes that ‘zombie’ worlds are logically possible in which people would behave like us but are not conscious. A zombie is defined as “…someone or something physically identical to me (or to any other conscious being), but lacking conscious experience altogether.” Chalmers considers that silicon based devices could lack conscious experiences although being able to perform the same functions as a person: “given that it is conceptually coherent that the group-mind set-up or my silicon isomorph could lack conscious experience, it follows that my zombie twin is an equally coherent possibility.” A world that is physically identical to ours, but where conscious experiences are inverted, is logically possible.

Throughout the higher-level sciences, reductive explanation works in the sense of functional definability. But when it comes to conscious experience, this sort of explanation fails. Even though we are able to explain the performance of all cognitive

---

84 Ibid, p.94.
85 Ibid, p.97.
and behavioral functions in the vicinity of experience there may still remain a further unanswered question i.e. the question about the accompaniment of experience in the performance of these functions. The answer to this question is the key to the problem of consciousness. Chalmers believes that “there is an explanatory gap (a term due to Levine 1983) between the functions and experience, and we need an explanatory bridge to cross it. A mere account of the functions stays on one side of the gap, so materials for the bridge must be found elsewhere.”

According to him in order to explain experience, we need a new approach. It is not enough to rely on the on the usual explanatory methods of cognitive science and neuroscience. These methods do a good job of explaining the cognitive functions but when it comes to the hard problem, the standard approach has nothing to say. Some of them even hold that there is no phenomenon called ‘experience’ to explain. But Chalmers contends that this approach is ultimately unsatisfactory. “Experience is the most central and manifests aspect of our mental lives, and indeed is perhaps the key explanandum in the science of mind. Because of this status as an explanandum, experience cannot be discarded like the vital spirit when a new theory comes along. Rather, it is the central fact that any theory of consciousness must explain. A theory that denies the phenomenon “solves” the problem by ducking the question.”

Since the current cognitive and neuroscientific strategy does not have the apparatus to dissolve the mystery of conscious experience it does not mean that ‘experience’ does not exist or cannot be explained at all. It only means that existing systems of enquiry are simply using the wrong sorts of methods: nothing that they give to us can yield an explanation. Therefore, “to account for conscious experience, we need an extra ingredient in the explanation.” Since none of the old methods work, so the solution must lie with something new.

Physical explanation suits to give explanations about physical structures by explaining macroscopic structures in terms of detailed microstructural constituents; and it provides a satisfying explanation of the performance of functions, accounting for these functions in terms of the physical mechanisms that perform them. This is

---

87 Ibid, p.12.
because a physical account can entail the facts about structures and functions: once the internal details of the physical account are given, the structural and functional properties fall out as an automatic consequence. But the structure and dynamics of physical processes yield only more structure and dynamics, so structures and functions are all we can expect these processes to explain. The facts about experience cannot be an automatic consequence of any physical account, as it is conceptually coherent that any given process could exist without experience. Experience may arise from the physical but is not entailed by the physical. Even though reductive methods – methods that explain a high level phenomenon wholly in terms of more basic physical processes – work well in many domains but these methods fail in case of explaining consciousness. Reductive methods are successful in most domains because what need explaining in those domains are structures and functions, and these are the kind of thing that a physical account can entail. But it is not so in case of conscious experiences according to Chalmers.

At moments like this people like McGinn have come up with arguments that the problem of consciousness is too hard for our limited minds and we are ‘cognitively closed’ with respect to the phenomenon. Others have argued that conscious experience lies outside the domain of scientific theory altogether. But Chalmers finds this kind of pessimism to be premature. He says “when simple methods of explanation are ruled out, we need to investigate the other alternatives. Given that reductive explanation fails, nonreductive explanation is the natural.”

Chalmers further suggests, “that a theory of consciousness should take experience as fundamental. We know that a theory of consciousness requires the addition of something fundamental to our ontology, as everything in physical theory is compatible with the absence of consciousness. We might add some entirely new nonphysical feature, from which experience can be derived, but it is hard to see what such a feature would be like. More likely, we will take experience itself as a fundamental feature of the world, alongside mass, charge, and space and time. If we take experience as fundamental, then we can go about the business of constructing a theory of experience.”

---

89 Ibid, p.16.
90 Ibid, p.17.
Where there is a fundamental property, there are fundamental laws. A nonreductive theory of experience will add new principles to the furniture of the basic laws of nature. These basic laws will ultimately carry the explanatory burden in a theory of consciousness. Just as we explain familiar high-level phenomena involving mass in terms of more basic principles involving mass and other entities, we might explain familiar phenomena involving experience in terms of more basic principles involving experience and other entities. “In particular, a nonreductive theory of experience will specify basic principles telling us how experience depends on the physical features of the world. These \textit{psychophysical} principles will not interfere with physical laws, as it seems that physical laws already form a closed system. Rather, they will be a supplement to a physical theory. A physical theory gives a theory of physical processes, and a psychophysical theory tells us how those processes give rise to experience. We know that experience depends on physical processes, but we also know that this dependence cannot be derived from physical laws alone. The new basic principles postulated by a nonreductive theory give us the extra ingredient that we need to build an explanatory bridge.”

A nonreductive theory of consciousness will consist in a number of psychophysical principles, principles connecting the properties of physical processes to the properties of experience. We can think of these principles as encapsulating the way in which experience arises from the physical. Ultimately, these principles should tell us what sort of physical properties are relevant to the emergence of experience, and just what sort of experience we should expect any given physical system to yield. This seems to be a tall order as in now, but there is no reason why we should not get started.

Chalmers also presents his own candidates for the psychophysical principles that might go into a theory of consciousness. They are: the principle of structural coherence; the principle of organizational invariance and the double aspect theory of information. The first two are the non basic principles where the systematic connections between processing and experience at a relatively high level. These principles can play a significant role in developing and constraining a theory of

\footnote{Ibid}
consciousness, but they are not cast at a sufficiently fundamental level to qualify as truly basic laws. The third principle i.e. the double aspect theory of information is Chalmers candidate for a basic principle that might form the cornerstone of a fundamental theory of consciousness. This final principle is particularly speculative, but it is the kind of speculation that is required if we are ever to have a satisfying theory of consciousness.

The first theory that Chalmers suggests i.e. the principle of structural coherence is a principle of coherence between the structure of consciousness and the structure of awareness. There is a direct correspondence between consciousness and awareness. This correspondence can be explored further to give us a theory of consciousness. It is a central fact about experience that it has a complex structure. There are relations of similarity and difference between experiences and relations in such things as relative intensity. Every subject’s experience can be at least partly characterized and decomposed in terms of the structural properties as similarity and difference relations, perceived location, relative intensity, geometric structure, and so on. It is also a central fact that to each of these structural features, there is a corresponding feature in the information-processing structure of awareness. In general, any information that is consciously experienced will also be cognitively represented. The fine-grained structure of the visual field will correspond to some fine-grained structure in visual processing. The same goes for experience in other modalities, and even for non sensory experiences. Internal mental images have geometric properties that are represented in processing. Even emotions have structural properties, such as relative intensity, that correspond directly to a structural property of processing; where there is greater intensity, we find a greater effect on later processes. In general, precisely because the structural properties of experience are accessible and reportable, those properties will be directly represented in the structure of awareness. This principle reflects the central facts that even though cognitive processes do not conceptually entail facts about conscious experience, consciousness and cognition do not float free of one another but cohere in an intimate way. The principle of structural coherence allows for a very useful kind of indirect explanation of experience in terms of physical processes. For example, we can use facts about neural processing of visual information to indirectly explain the structure of color.
space. The facts about neural processing can entail and explain the structure of awareness; if we take the coherence principle for granted, the structure of experience will also be explained. Empirical investigation might even lead us to better understand the structure of awareness within a bat, shedding indirect light on Nagel’s vexing question of what it is like to be a bat. This principle provides a natural interpretation of much existing work on the explanation of consciousness, although it is often appealed to implicitly. It is so familiar that it is taken for granted by almost everybody, and is a central plank in the cognitive explanation of consciousness. The coherence between consciousness and awareness also allows a natural interpretation of works in neuroscience directed at isolating the substrate (or the neural correlate) of consciousness. Various specific hypotheses have been put forward. If we accept the principle of coherence, the most direct physical correlate of consciousness is awareness. The different specific hypotheses can be interpreted as empirical suggestions about how awareness can be achieved. Given the coherence between consciousness and awareness, it follows that a mechanism of awareness will itself be a correlate of conscious experience. The processes that explain awareness will at the same time be part of the basis of consciousness.

The second idea suggested by Chalmers i.e. the principle of organizational variance states that any two systems with the same fine-grained functional organization will have qualitatively identical experiences. If the causal patterns of neural organization were duplicated in silicon, for example, with a silicon chip for every neuron and the same patterns of interaction, then the same experiences would arise. According to this principle, what matters for emergence of experience is not the specific physical makeup of a system, but the abstract pattern of causal interaction between its components. This principle is controversial, of course. Some like Searle have thought that consciousness is tied to a specific biology, so that a silicon isomorph of a human need not be conscious. Chalmers believes that the principle can be given significant support by the analysis of thought-experiments, however. If the argument goes through, we know that only physical properties directly relevant to the emergence of experience are organizational properties. This acts as a further strong constraint on the theory of consciousness.
The third idea suggested by Chalmers is the basic principle that might ultimately explain away the constraints related to the conscious phenomena. This basic principle centrally involves the notion of information. Where there is information, there are information states embedded in an information space. An information space has the basic structure of different relations between its elements, characterizing the ways in which different elements in a space are similar or different, possibly in complex ways. An information space is an abstract object, but we can see information as physically embodied when there is space of distinct physical states, the difference between which can be transmitted down some causal pathway. The states that are transmitted can be seen as themselves constituting as information space. This leads to a natural hypothesis: that information (or at least some information) has two basic aspects, a physical aspect and a phenomenal aspect. This has the status of a basic principle that might underlie and explain the emergence of experience from the physical. Experience arises by virtue of its status of one aspect of information, when the other aspect is found embodied in physical processing. Once a fundamental link between information and experience is discovered than, the door will open to some grander metaphysical speculation concerning the nature of the world. For example, it is often noted Physics characterizes its basic entities only extrinsically, in terms of their relations to other entities, which are themselves characterized extrinsically, in terms of their relations to other entities, which are themselves characterized extrinsically, and so on. The intrinsic nature of physical entities is left aside. Some argue that no such intrinsic property exist, but then one is left with a world that is pure causal flux (a pure flow of information) with no properties for causation to relate. If one allows that intrinsic property exist, a natural speculation is that the intrinsic properties of the physical – the properties that causation ultimately relates – are themselves phenomenal properties. We might say that phenomenal properties are the internal aspects of information. This could answer a concern about the causal relevance of experience – a natural worry, given a picture on which the physical domain is causally closed, and on which experience is supplementary to the physical. The informational view allows us to understand how experience might have a subtle kind of causal relevance in virtue of its status as the intrinsic nature of the physical. This metaphysical speculation is probably best ignored for the purpose of developing a scientific theory, but in addressing some philosophical issues it is quite suggestive.
Even though the theories presented by Chalmers are speculative yet they are competitive theories. Right now these are more of an idea than a theory. To have any hope of eventual explanatory success, it will have to be specified more fully and fleshed out in more powerful form. Still, reflection on just what is plausible and implausible about it, on where it works and where it fails, can only lead to a better theory. Most existing theories of consciousness deny the phenomenon, explain something else, or elevate the problem to an eternal mystery. Chalmers hopes to have shown that it is possible to make progress on the problem if we take it seriously. To make further progress, we will need further investigation, more refined theories, and more careful analysis. The hard problem is a hard problem, but there is no reason to believe that it will remain permanently unsolved.

Unfortunately, without any definite proposal for how conscious experience is realized it seems premature to declare that the ideas incorporated by Chalmers to understand consciousness are correct. His idea of separating the study of cognition from the study of consciousness is noteworthy. Cognition is a psychological fact, consciousness is a phenomenal fact. Psychological facts, by virtue of their causal (or functional) nature, can be explained by the physical sciences. It is not clear; instead, what science is necessary to explain consciousness. To start with Chalmers focuses on the notion of supervenience. He argues that most facts supervene logically on the physical facts. There are few exceptions and consciousness is one of them. Consciousness is not logically supervient on the physical. What Chalmers is saying is, quite simply, that the physical sciences can explain everything except consciousness, and he uses his several variants of supervenience to prove it mathematically. Truth is that, at the end, we have to take his word for it. At present we are at dark about the validity of his proposals without a concrete theory. But there is positivity about his attitude as unlike some of his contemporaries he does not conclude that consciousness cannot be explained. He says that it cannot be explained the way the physical sciences explain everything else i.e. by reducing the system to ever smaller parts. He leaves the door open for a ‘nonreductive’ explanation of consciousness.
4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

After an examination of the most important contemporary philosophers views on ‘self, consciousness and the body’ it may be said that contemporary philosophy of mind along with other disciplines have been putting much effort to solve the problem of mind-body. Despite great efforts of many contemporary philosophers, the study of consciousness has not reached its desired end. There is no dearth of invocation to the mystery aspect of consciousness in the contemporary times. Edmund Husserl stated that consciousness was the greatest wonder of all wonders. David Chalmers opens his new book *The Conscious Mind* as follows: “Conscious experience is at once the most familiar thing in the world and the most mysterious. There is nothing we know more directly than consciousness, but it is far from clear how to reconcile it with everything else we know.”\(^92\) Another recent book *Conscious Experience* begins with these words, “How can consciousness arise in a physical universe? ... Today, the problem of consciousness – perhaps together with the question of the origin of the universe – marks the very limit of human striving for understanding. To quote another expert: Consciousness is almost certainly a property of the physical brain. The major mystery, however, is how neurons achieve effects such as being aware of a toothache or the smell of cinnamon. Neuroscience has not reached the stage where we can satisfactorily answer these questions… But on the other hand we have Dennett’s book titled *Consciousness Explained* (1991) that suggests otherwise. He goes as far as to claim that ‘self’ is a cultural construct that emerged in ancient Greece.”\(^93\) But despite the widespread acknowledgments regarding the elusiveness of the conscious phenomenon regarding the bewitchment of our intelligence it, the present times have seen a considerable progress in the field of consciousness study. There are many who have been devoted to its study. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, we have Dennett who has come up with a model of consciousness called the multiple drafts model, Searle who has provided us an insight into the essential features that any theory of consciousness must have, Chalmers who has propounded an altogether new approach or a new methodology to investigate consciousness which he calls ‘psychophysical laws’ and thereby presents his own probable candidates for

\(^{92}\) David Chalmers, *The Conscious mind*, op. cit., p.3.

psychophysical principles that might go into a theory of consciousness and Mc Ginn who no doubt endorses a pessimistic view i.e. ‘cognitive closure’ regarding the knowledge of consciousness but his views must not be dismissed as saying nothing. He does not merely throw his opinion on us but analyses thoroughly the conscious phenomenon and there by gives his set of reasons for calling consciousness something beyond human understanding. So, in the contemporary times too we have varied viewpoints regarding the mind. There is one important common feature that all of the contemporary philosophers discussed above agree upon is the belief that consciousness is a biological feature. It may be a mystery as in now as we have not hit the right answers regarding it but it is not a miracle at any cost.

But whether there has been any progress in the Philosophy of mind over the years is debatable. Although there has been progress, yet, it does not seem so due to its slow nature. The answer would, to a large extent, depend on what we mean by progress in philosophical terms. But the good thing is that the debate on consciousness is ongoing and the slowness of its progress has in no ways hampered its philosophical speculations. And as long as there are positive speculations we must not lose hope as intellectual engagements will definitely bear fruits.