



Introspection and the Limits of Physicalism in Consciousness Studies: Toward an Analytic Idealist Framework

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ABSTRACT

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Consciousness represents one of the greatest philosophical and cognitive scientific problems to date. Contemporary neuroscience and artificial intelligence have been immensely successful in describing neural mechanisms and behavior, yet the subjective, qualitative essence of conscious experience remains difficult to explain within either discipline. It is argued here that functionalist and physicalist approaches are fundamentally flawed because they are largely based on third-person methodologies and fail to accommodate the first-person nature of consciousness. Phenomenological introspection is utilized to examine aspects of conscious experience such as intentionality, temporality, self-consciousness and the human quest for meaning. It then looks at the dimension of consciousness' existential meaning as analyzed in phenomenology and existential philosophy. It is further argued that the human search for meaning is a constitutive aspect of consciousness, rather than an accidental evolutionary byproduct. The present inquiry provides a framework for addressing these questions via the metaphysical approach of Analytic Idealism. The metaphysical argument offered is that consciousness is ontologically primary and the external world represents the appearance of these internal processes. In conclusion, the study contends that the field of consciousness studies can best be advanced through a dual approach of empirical research combined with first-person introspective inquiry, as well as a metaphysics which positions consciousness as fundamental.

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1.0 Introduction

Consciousness continues to be the most interesting topic for philosophers as well as for scientists studying cognitive science, psychology, neuroscience and even artificial intelligence. Despite a surge in recent scientific and technological advancements over the last few decades, we have failed to adequately reduce and explain subjective consciousness using scientific and materialistic theories. Neuroscience has been incredibly successful in determining and explaining the neural correlates of conscious experience, emotion, memory, cognition, perception and behavior. Techniques such as electroencephalography (EEG) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), coupled with artificial intelligence inspired neural network modeling have been very effective in identifying correlations between patterns of brain activity and corresponding mental states, but they explain how the processes associated with consciousness function but not why it has subjective experience at all. The topic of consciousness has quickly become the central philosophical debate of the 21st century.

The central issue arises because conscious experience has a strongly qualitative component that can be difficult to account for through objective observation. Humans do not just take in information like computers; they actually feel emotions, have thoughts and beliefs, experience sensations and perceptions from a first-person point of view. The taste of coffee, the feeling of pain, the joy of meeting friends and the awareness of our own presence all involve a qualitative nature to consciousness, known as qualia. Qualia are first-person states that seem impervious to complete physical explanation, which distinguishes consciousness from all other phenomena examined by science, because consciousness is not just a thing that can be observed and investigated, but a condition that makes all other things observable and investigable in the first place.

Modern philosophy of mind is currently dominated by materialism, and within that realm of discussion by functionalism. Materialism views the universe as being fundamentally physical, thus consciousness emerges from physical processes that take place in the brain. Mental states in this view can be reduced to and explained through the physical states of the brain. Functionalism expands on this view, contending that it is the function or causal role a mental state plays within a system that matters rather than the intrinsic qualitative nature of the experience. Cognitive and mental processes are thereby analogized to computations or operations carried out by a system of either natural or artificial intelligence. Such accounts gained immense popularity as it is consistent with neuroscience, computation theory, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence.

This rise in artificial intelligence and in the computation aspect of the universe has further strengthened our faith in the view of computation being responsible for consciousness. It is indeed possible to view it this way, and even simulate or create consciousness in machines through sufficient complexity in computation. Through artificial intelligence and machine learning neural networks and predictive computation models mimic intelligent human behavior such as decision making, language acquisition, pattern recognition and problem solving with ever-increasing sophistication. But in none of these cases are the machines necessarily aware; they are simply performing sophisticated computational operations. Thus, it seems that functionality alone is not

sufficient to produce phenomenal experience. One of the major challenges to materialism came from Thomas Nagel's famous essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (Nagel, 1974).

He argued that even if we knew every aspect of a bat's brain and bodily structure and its relation to the external world, we still would not be able to know what it is like to be a bat. His argument highlighted the irreducibly subjective nature of consciousness. Later on, Joseph Levine coined the term the "explanatory gap", emphasizing the disparity between descriptions of physical processes and actual experience. David Chalmers went even further and made a distinction between the easy problems and the hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers, 1996).

The easy problems address functional explanation of consciousness, while the hard problem seeks to determine why any physical system should have subjective experience. Despite impressive advancements, the "hard problem of consciousness"- explaining why consciousness is an experiential state and what that feels like-remains stubbornly unsolved. Contemporary neuroscientific approaches such as Integrated Information Theory (IIT), Global Workspace Theory (GWT), predictive processing, and higher-order theories try to elucidate the phenomenon by referencing the architecture and functioning of neurons and information processing (Tononi, 2023).

According to IIT, for example, consciousness is linked to the extent that information within a system is integrated, while according to predictive processing the brain constantly predicts upcoming inputs based on past experiences in an effort to minimize prediction error. While these models provide valuable insights into the brain and the mechanisms underpinning consciousness, they still appear to address the correlational or functional rather than subjective aspects of it. Therefore, in the age of significant developments in neuroscience and AI, philosophical discussions regarding consciousness have not abated but, if anything, intensified. Scholarship from 2025 and 2026 continues to address the issues of reductionism, namely, whether it's possible to account for the experiential side of conscious phenomena within the confines of physical computation. An increased dissatisfaction with physicalist materialism has contributed to a renewed interest in panpsychism, neutral monism, phenomenology and idealism in general. Thinkers such as Philip Goff and Galen Strawson have suggested that consciousness might be a basic characteristic of reality, rather than simply emergent from matter. Indeed, contemporary idealists contend that it's the matter that is derived from conscious phenomena, rather than vice versa (Goff, 2019; Strawson, 2006).

The importance of the paper lies in its aim to integrate phenomenological and metaphysical dimensions within consciousness studies. Most approaches today can be categorized as one or the other and remain incomplete since they seem to prioritize one aspect while neglecting another. Science and materialism tend to emphasize explanation based on external phenomena, but seem to neglect the intrinsic feel of consciousness. Conversely, phenomenology and existentialism tend to describe conscious existence through the description of subjective experience but lack systematic metaphysical accounts on the ontology of it. This has resulted in the fragmentation of consciousness studies between the descriptive empirical accounts and the philosophical explanations.

This paper defends the idea that third-person scientific methods cannot alone reveal what consciousness is. This is due to the fact that consciousness itself is a condition for any third-person scientific account to be possible: All scientific experiments, measurements and theories rely on conscious awareness. Consciousness is unlike other phenomena in the natural world by virtue of being both the object of study and the medium of inquiry, and we cannot explain one based on the other alone. With this comes the defense of introspection as a valid philosophical method. In modern scientific contexts, introspection is often dismissed as private or unreliable introspection. However, within phenomenology introspection means self-observation without arbitrariness or subjectivity but disciplined introspective examination. Thus, following Husserl's phenomenological method, this paper claims that introspection is a rigorous philosophical method to examine what consciousness is as we experience it, always in reference to its intentionality, i.e. Its directedness toward something (Husserl, 1970).

Heidegger built upon the phenomenological analysis by emphasizing human existence as Being-in-the-world, human being as an active meaning-generating entity deeply involved in the lived world (Heidegger, 1962). Existential thinkers, including Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, describe human existence in terms of anxiety, freedom, mortality and the self, which appear incompatible with an exclusive biological account based on survival needs or purely calculative mechanisms. Human existence is not just about perception and interaction with the world but also questioning, death awareness, the burden of freedom, and the human quest for meaning; all features of human existence which seem to exceed what we can expect from a machine that aims to survive, rather than flourish, in the world.

This paper defends the notion that it is these meaningful or existential aspects of conscious life that are the object of the research: Consciousness constantly transcends necessity through questions of identity, meaning, morality and spirituality, even at the cost of biological fitness. Meaning-seeking seems to be deeply integrated into human consciousness itself. This paper then tries to establish an ontological explanation capable of encompassing phenomenological and existentialist accounts by presenting Bernardo Kastrup's Analytic Idealism. This theory offers a reversal of materialism by proposing that mind, rather than matter, is the ground of existence and reality can be seen as the appearance of conscious processes on another level.

Analytic Idealism tries to be empirically coherent and scientifically grounded unlike some other metaphysical idealist systems, and seeks to avoid physicalism. Kastrup agrees with scientists in terms of describing objective laws, but sees them as laws of the appearances rather than of independent matter. This paper is aiming to resolve a gap that currently exists in consciousness studies: There is a separation between phenomenological analysis and metaphysical speculation. Often, philosophical studies only describe and not speculate; other times, the speculations fail to describe conscious phenomena in depth and in first-person perspective. This paper proposes an integration. The goal of this paper is threefold: a critical examination of physicalism; a defense of the introspective method; and an evaluation of Analytic Idealism as a metaphysical candidate for the explanation of consciousness that accounts for subjectivity, the self and the human existence as meaning-seeking.

Consciousness is ultimately a subject matter that cannot be exclusively explored through the third-person method of natural science since consciousness is the very condition of the scientific enterprise itself, the presupposition of empirical research and of all experiences, predictions and explanations. It is what makes experience possible. Consciousness is what is "always already there" and the attempt to account for consciousness purely from external scientific data runs the risk of failing to capture consciousness itself in its most characteristic feature: Subjectivity.

2.0 Literature Review

History of the philosophy of consciousness is characterized by conflicting attempts to explain the mind-matter problem. Debates in contemporary consciousness philosophy continue on whether or not consciousness could be explained via physical processes or an inherently distinct ontological structure. Whether consciousness can be reduced to physical processes, or has an inherently distinct ontology, various approaches such as physicalism, functionalism, phenomenology, existentialism, panpsychism, and idealism have been posited, yet none has gained universal acceptance, evidencing the difficulty and limitations of explaining this problem.

Materialist and functionalist perspectives-physicalism and functionalism, respectively-dominate contemporary analytic philosophy and cognitive science, both claiming consciousness is ultimately reducible to brain activity. Identity theorists such as Smart and Place contended that mental states are, simply, brain states, and thus reducible to a subject's neurophysiological processes (Smart, 1959; Place, 1956). Functionalists, led by Putnam and Dennett, later shifted focus away from the material substance of a mind, instead on its functional states, or role in cognitive processes, suggesting that consciousness is merely an information-processing operation performed within the cognitive system (Putnam, 1967; Dennett, 1991).

These theories gained prominence on account of the speed with which neuroscience and cognitive science advanced-neuroscientific imaging technologies, along with neurocomputational models and advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning, further bolstered the computationally oriented models of consciousness championed by many scientists and philosophers, and in particular the predictive processing and global workspace models prevalent in neuroscience today.

In spite of these advancements, criticisms of reductive physicalism endure. Thomas Nagel famously challenged the objective viewpoint by highlighting its inadequacy in capturing subjective conscious experience-his work on 'what it is like to be a bat' demonstrated the inaccessibility of a subjective conscious perspective to scientific knowledge alone. Joseph Levine built upon this argument with the concept of the explanatory gap, which refers to the lack of an obvious logical connection between brain activity and phenomenological experience. Later, David Chalmers differentiated between functional explanation of consciousness and its harder problem of consciousness (Levine, 1983, Chalmers, 1996).

This criticism continued in recent philosophy of consciousness: several authors, such as Philip Goff and Galen Strawson, revived panpsychism-a worldview which states that consciousness is a fundamental property of all things, even at the lowest levels of material

structure. Panpsychism is thought to circumvent the hard problem altogether by positing an ontological framework in which consciousness is never absent. Similarly, Russellian Monism works within a monistic paradigm but posits that external descriptions of a thing cannot fully explain its internal, inherent properties.

Yet, the phenomenological approach provides an alternative paradigm to studying consciousness. Edmund Husserl dismissed attempts to explain consciousness through external observation, advocating the study of phenomena through rigorous introspective examination (Husserl, 1970). Husserl's notion of intentionality is foundational: consciousness is never a passive receptivity, but rather an always-directed phenomenon-in all cases, consciousness is consciousness-of-something (an object, an image, a thought).

Martin Heidegger's phenomenology of Being-in-the-world radicalized Husserlian phenomenology by shifting focus from consciousnesses as an object of examination to human existence as the entity for which consciousness and existence are intertwined (Heidegger, 1962). He condemned traditional metaphysics for failing to appreciate human existence as beings immersed in and directed towards the world, arguing that an account of consciousness must take into consideration the phenomena of temporality, mortality, and the concerned involvement of the individual with the world, a characteristic of conscious beings not properly accounted for in the mechanistic account of consciousness. Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of existence built upon Heidegger's view, characterizing human consciousness as being characterized by freedom, the existence of oneself-as-a-projection toward the future, and the fundamental incompleteness of the human being.

Soren Kierkegaard, an existentialist prior to the formalization of existentialism, discussed the importance of anxiety, despair and the struggle for meaning as part of subjective conscious life (Kierkegaard, 1980). According to these existentialist thinkers, human existence is never solely a cognitive pursuit; rather, a consciousness always functions as a dimension of the existence that continually defines, interprets and seeks meaning in itself and its world, none of which the materialist paradigm appears well-equipped to explain.

The failures of materialist approaches are evident in the contemporary resurgence of idealism, the position that consciousness is fundamental to existence. Bernardo Kastrup's Analytic Idealism, a particularly influential form of idealism, reinterprets idealism in analytic philosophy- Kastrup rejects traditional forms of idealism on the ground that they are not conducive to scientific findings and offers a view of the world in which consciousness is primary, while the material world is simply the phenomenal manifestation of what he calls, 'the altered state of mind of an individual mind', a part of a much larger consciousness process (Kastrup, 2019).

Kastrup presents a strong challenge against the ability of materialism to provide a theory of consciousness and seeks to eradicate the explanatory gap in a single swoop, a feat few theories of consciousness are capable of. As consciousness philosophy grows more complex, the appeal of non-materialist approaches such as Analytic Idealism increases as it becomes ever clearer that materialist models of consciousness are insufficient.

Unfortunately, current models have their limitations: materialist models lack any first-

person framework of understanding; phenomenological models often fail to offer a robust ontological theory of consciousness; and while the aforementioned metaphysical paradigms are helpful in providing a framework within which to explain consciousness, they rarely engage directly with phenomenology. Accordingly, there remains a gap between the phenomenological description of conscious life and an all-encompassing philosophical explanation of consciousness.

This study will attempt to bridge the gap between phenomenological introspection and Analytic Idealism, attempting to incorporate first-person analysis into a material framework that views consciousness as fundamental. I hope to contribute to this ongoing discourse about the limits of materialism, the nature of consciousness, and the very essence of our subjective being.

3.0 Methodology

This study is philosophical, qualitative, and phenomenological in method. Given that consciousness itself is essentially a first-person phenomenon, this thesis contends that third-person empiricism, in isolation, is unable to provide a full account of consciousness. Thus, in this study, phenomenological introspection, conceptual analysis and comparative philosophical examination serve as the principal research methods.

Phenomenological introspection is the central research method in this study. From the perspective of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, introspection is neither haphazard self-examination nor subjectivism but a systematic investigation into structures of conscious experience. Phenomenological investigation is concerned with the structures through which consciousness shows up in lived experience before and independent of theoretical elaboration or reductionist approaches.

Through introspection the various structures of conscious experience, such as intentionality, temporality, consciousness of consciousness, existential questioning and human intentionality towards meaning, were studied since they are problematic and difficult to approach solely through the third-person viewpoint; first-person experience is treated as a form of genuine philosophical data.

In addition to phenomenological analysis, the research involves conceptual and comparative philosophical examination of a range of major contemporary theories of consciousness including physicalism, functionalism, eliminative materialism, panpsychism, existential phenomenology and Analytic Idealism. In this research, the comparative approach focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of each account of consciousness particularly in relation to subjectivism and existential meaning.

The research largely relies on textual and conceptual analysis of core works of a number of important thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Thomas Nagel, David Chalmers, Joseph Levine, Philip Goff, Galen Strawson and Bernardo Kastrup. Contemporary work in the philosophy of mind, consciousness studies, cognitive science and metaphysics up to the year 2026 has also been taken into account.

The methodology of the research unfolds in three stages. In the first stage, through phenomenological introspection, the basic structures of conscious experience are observed. Second, some of contemporary physicalism and functionalism are critically analyzed and

contrasted with phenomenal evidence, then Analytic Idealism is examined as a possible candidate to reconcile subjectivism and scientific knowledge.

In a word, the research neither denies empirical approach nor embraces its totality; rather, it claims that neither of them alone can provide a full explanation for the nature of conscious experience. While neuroscience aims at mapping correlates of consciousness in the brain and revealing the functional properties of conscious experiences, phenomenological investigation sheds light on the essential characteristics of consciousness as experienced by individuals. Therefore, a complementarity of empirically oriented approaches and first-person investigations is the overall aspiration of this study.

The overall goal of the present study is a synthesis of the phenomenological analysis of experience, existential contemplation and metaphysical enquiry which aims to advance a philosophical understanding of consciousness that goes beyond reductive physicalism.

4.0 Findings and Results

This philosophical examination of consciousness draws upon phenomenological introspection, conceptual analysis, and a critical comparison of current models of consciousness. Although the inquiry remains primarily qualitative and philosophical, rather than empirical in nature, a number of major conclusions can be derived concerning the essence of consciousness and the limitations of physicalist explication.

The primary conclusion reached from this study is that conscious awareness cannot be adequately reduced to a third-person physical description. Theories based on physicalism and functionalism are capable of accounting for many cognitive and behavioral functions of consciousness, such as perception, memory, data processing, and decision making. However, these theories fail to offer an adequate explanation for the qualitative aspect of experience as lived from the subjective perspective. The analysis demonstrates that an explanatory gap persists between purely physical phenomena and the subjective nature of consciously experienced awareness. One's knowledge of neurological processes does not provide one with knowledge as to how consciousness feels from an internal perspective.

A second significant conclusion concerns the importance of introspection as a methodological tool. As the phenomenological analysis reveals, several structural features of consciousness are not visible through an examination of external observable processes. Introspection reveals such structures of consciousness as intentionality, temporality, self-awareness, existential questioning, and orientation toward meaning. Consciousness constantly presents itself as an active engagement rather than a passive perception, a relation toward other objects, possibilities, memories, values, and meanings. The study therefore concludes that a first-person inquiry is essential for fully understanding consciousness.

Thirdly, it appears that an individual's existential orientation is a fundamental rather than an incidental aspect of consciousness. One's conscious life is shaped by not just awareness, but also by question, interpretation, fear, and by one's pursuit of meaning. An individual must continually confront questions of death, freedom, identity, and purpose. These existential considerations appear to be constituent components of consciously lived reality rather than

incidental or derivative evolutionary results. A physicalist approach cannot easily explain why biological mechanisms solely focused on survival should also create an individual capable of existential dread concerning meaning and existence.

As to the comparison between existing theories, physicalism and functionalism possess high explanatory power concerning objective behavior and neural correlation, but low explanatory power concerning subjective awareness. Panpsychism attempts to address the problem of consciousness by taking consciousness as fundamental; however, panpsychism encounters difficult problems with regard to the problem of how conscious entities can be combined. Phenomenology appears to explain certain structural aspects of consciousness without committing to any metaphysical stance concerning its ultimate nature. Analytic Idealism seems to offer a successful blend of subjective and metaphysical explanation. With consciousness as fundamental, there is no need to explain the emergence of conscious awareness from unconscious matter; the physical world is simply the external presentation of underlying subjective experience. Such an approach appears to be the most consistent with all phenomenological observations as well as an individual's sense of self, meaning, and existential orientation.

A final point of significance derived from this study is that consciousness seems irreducibly first-person. Each and every attempt to objectify consciousness necessarily relies on the already existing conscious experience of the observer. It is therefore not like any ordinary object of scientific inquiry because consciousness is simultaneously the subject and the condition of every inquiry into it. This appears to limit the explanatory power of exclusively objective approaches to consciousness research. Consciousness does not require explanation from an external, third-person perspective; it presents itself to consciousness as inherently meaningful and significant from an internal perspective

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study further corroborate the burgeoning philosophical worry that reductive physicalism is an inadequate explanation for consciousness. While neuroscience and cognitive science have made remarkable strides in accounting for the functional aspects of neural and cognitive processes, the issue of subjective experience itself still remains entirely unaddressed. Indeed, the question of why neural processes should be accompanied by conscious awareness at all remains a primary and stubborn challenge for physicalist explanations of consciousness.

The continued and unrelenting nature of the hard problem of consciousness indicates that the problem might not be simply one of scientific under specification, but rather one of methodological inadequacy. Traditionally, scientific inquiry has always depended on the observation of phenomena from the third-person perspective and the construction of outward descriptions and measurements. Consciousness, by contrast, is irreducibly first-person: unlike any other objects that science investigates, consciousness is not merely an object of study, it is also the condition under which such observation is possible. As such, a form of epistemological dualism is set up, in which it is impossible to adequately 'take consciousness out of oneself' and objectify it without fundamentally distorting or losing its phenomenal quality.

Phenomenological introspection therefore holds philosophical significance. The aim of Husserl's phenomenological approach was specifically to account for consciousness not as the

consequence of external causes, but as directly experienced reality; through introspection consciousness reveals itself as intentional, temporal and self-conscious. Consciousness is always directed towards something, whether it is a perceived object, a memory, a potential future event, or an abstract idea, indicating that consciousness is an active process and not a passive, reactive phenomenon.

The finding that participants express existential concerns about their being strengthens an existentialist argument against reductionism. Humans are not mere organisms with specific survival behaviors; they are conscious subjects concerned about meaning and mortality. Heidegger proposed that humans are 'Beings-in-the-world,' fundamentally entwined within a world of meaning; Sartre, too, conceived consciousness as an incomplete subject-being whose nature is one of always overreaching its current condition toward the future (Sartre, 1956).

It is arguable that if consciousness were purely a reduction to survival behaviors, it would be incomprehensible why existential anxieties and questions of mortality, identity, and transcendency would arise with such profound force. The findings of this study appear to support the assertion that an exploration of meaning is inherently a part of consciousness itself. With this context, Analytic Idealism is introduced as an alternative metaphysical framework, compatible with both phenomenology and existentialism. Developed primarily by Bernardo Kastrup, Analytic Idealism overcomes the problem of the explanatory gap by dispensing with the assumption that matter is ontologically primary (Kastrup, 2019). Instead of deriving consciousness from purely non-conscious physical processes, it claims that consciousness is fundamental reality itself.

One of the attractive features of this position is its seamless integration with phenomenal data. Intention, self-awareness, and the quest for meaning are no longer considered anomalous by-products of inert physical processes, but are natural characteristics of a basically experiential reality. Physical objects become nothing more than the presentation and representation of experiential processes, and are not ontologically distinct external entities that generate conscious experience independently.

Analytic Idealism does not deny the efficacy of empirical science, but rather contextualizes it within an idealist ontology; scientific laws still describe observed regularities and relationships between phenomena in reality, which are simply identified with the lawful workings of consciousness rather than an independent physical substrate. This gives a continued role to empirical investigation while circumventing the pitfalls of materialism.

There are, however, objections to idealism; issues of metaphysical speculation and empirical verifiability abound. Also, there are questions regarding individuation, consciousness, and dissociation. In spite of these potential weaknesses, Analytic Idealism represents a less counter-intuitive picture of reality than materialism as it avoids the problem of deriving something as qualitatively rich as subjective awareness from qualitatively empty matter.

The broader issues that arise include recent progress in artificial intelligence and computation. Such advancements pose questions about the nature of artificial intelligence and the possibility of machine consciousness, but, even if it proves possible to develop sophisticated artificial intelligence, the problem of the subjective phenomenal content remains. Information

processing alone cannot guarantee the presence of consciousness; there appears to be a categorical difference between conscious awareness and functional operations, the relevance of which is highlighted by this study.

Ultimately, the implications of this study suggest a need to shift away from an exclusively empirical and towards a more integrated view of consciousness research. Only a theory of consciousness that takes into account both first and third-person approaches can account for the complexity and richness of conscious experience, an understanding which the implications of this study strongly endorse.

5.1 Conclusion

The problem of consciousness is one of the most challenging and unresolved issues in philosophy and the cognitive sciences. Despite major advances in neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and cognitive psychology, the subjective and qualitative aspect of conscious experience seems to elude total explanation within physicalist and reductionist paradigms (Chalmers, 1996).

While physicalism and functionalism explain many behaviors and cognitive processes effectively, the question of why conscious experience exists at all seems more elusive. It was argued that the failure of current studies of consciousness is not only a scientific failure but also a failure of method and ontology. Unlike other scientific objects, consciousness is the subject and the condition of all inquiry. Thus, any attempt to study consciousness already presupposes it. Because of this it is possible to miss the very phenomenon one seeks to explain by exclusively approaching it from a third person perspective.

Through introspective method, the paper uncovered many of the defining structures of consciousness. Consciousness is defined as intention, temporality, self-awareness, existentially questioning, and is directed toward meaning. From this we see that consciousness is not passive or mechanical, but active, relational, and directed toward existence. Human beings are not merely processing information but are constantly interpreting reality, questioning the meaning of their existence and their mortality.

We also see that the existential dimensions of consciousness are profoundly problematic for reductionist materialism. Matters of meaning, identity, freedom, and purpose do not appear to be accidental results of evolution but integral to consciousness itself. Existential phenomenology thus brings unique and important insight into dimensions of consciousness ignored by scientific reductionism.

To remedy the failure of these disciplines and bring together the above aspects of consciousness into a coherent ontology, the paper considered Bernardo Kastrup's Analytic Idealism. By taking consciousness as primary on the ontological level, analytic idealism offers a solution to the explanatory gap of physicalist approaches. Physical reality is interpreted not as something that generates consciousness, but as the outer appearance of internal experiential processes that take place within consciousness.

This is not to say that the findings of empirical science should be discarded, but that we may need a new relationship between phenomenology and neuroscience. While science may

attempt to account for the neural correlates and mechanisms of consciousness, phenomenology will probe the structure and the meaning of conscious experience from within. These two are merely two different but relevant aspects of the same thing.

Ultimately, any attempt to produce a working model of consciousness must take into account first-person inquiry, existential analysis and metaphysical reflection as necessary and equal components of the inquiry alongside empirical investigation. The subjective can no longer be dismissed or assumed to be less "real" than the objective without a complete picture of the human condition.

Contribution

Muhammad Javid: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Muhammad Jawwad: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

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