

The Return of Cartesian Tradition from the Problem of Consciousness: Chalmers' Naturalistic Attribute Dualism and Zombie Argument

Jialing Chen^{1,*,†}, Zijun Lin^{2,†}, Yuanzhe Wang^{3,†}, Junru Xiang^{4,†}

¹*School of Philosophy and Social Development, Huaqiao University, Xiamen, Fujian, China*

²*Hanlin Experimental School, Dongguan, Guangdong, China*

³*Sendelta International Academy, Shenzhen, Guangdong, China*

⁴*Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China*

*Corresponding author. Email: 19013010002@stu.hqu.edu.cn

†These authors contributed equally.

ABSTRACT

By reconstructing David Chalmers' naturalistic dualism and philosophical zombie argument and the typical debates with Dennett and Searle on consciousness, this essay aims to explore the situation of Chalmers' naturalistic dualism in the context of the prevalence of contemporary physicalist achievements and methodologies, the refutations to which it has been subjected, the developing trends in contemporary naturalistic dualism. The paper concludes that Chalmers' naturalistic dualism can be seen as a 'neo-Cartesian trend' return to contemporary philosophy of mind in the context of the prominent results of neuroscience and physicalism, offering a new framework for the study of consciousness, but whether it advances the study of consciousness is a question that remains to be answered, which is an important subject to further investigation.

Keywords: *David Chalmers, naturalistic dualism, consciousness, neo-Cartesian trend*

1. INTRODUCTION

David Chalmers introduced Kripke's argument against Physicalism, which is generally known as the zombie argument, and have it as the evidence of the failure of, at least the current version of, Physicalism. The argument is composed as the following: 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 in 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. In this argument, Kripke argues that since there may be a world in which the physical is identical to that of our world while the consciousness exists not, hence the facts about consciousness are not logically supervenient on the physical and thus are facts that beyond the physical facts. Being aware of the flaw of physicalism, Chalmers introduced his naturalistic dualism [1].

To understand Chalmers' naturalistic dualism, we must first understand what naturalism and dualism are.

We will start with the simpler of the two: dualism. Dualism is the theory that the mental and physical are completely distinct from one another, that mental substances cannot be reduced to something physical. Therefore, Chalmers is identified as a dualist for he criticizes the physicalist view of mental experience and believes mental states are fundamentally distinct from and not reducible to anything physical. Naturalism, on the other hand, is a much trickier idea to explain. Currently, there is no precise meaning for naturalism in contemporary philosophy as different modern philosophers interpret it differently. In Chalmers' case, he believes "It is naturalistic because it posits that everything is a consequence of a network of basic properties and laws, and because it is compatible with all the results of contemporary science" [2]. By believing that Chalmers argues that it is reasonable to be treated as just another natural phenomenon [1]. The network of basic properties and laws and basic natural laws both refers to scientific laws or the laws of nature, laws like conservation laws and electromagnetism. These laws explain a vast range of natural phenomena. Chalmers believes that consciousness is just another natural phenomenon. As opposed to being

transcendental, meaning being spiritual and above the empirical, Chalmers thinks consciousness can be explained using laws of nature, ones that have not been created yet.

Naturalistic dualism, the view held by Chalmers, states that mental states supervene the physical state. He proposed that consciousness is not reducible to any physical system because it is a fundamental element of physics. Just like how physicists define space, time and mass as fundamental building blocks of the universe, Chalmers believes consciousness is one of those basic building blocks that can't be explained with anything more basic. This then means we need to create fundamental laws to govern consciousness, laws like the laws of gravity or quantum mechanics. In the 19th century, Maxwell realized that electromagnetic phenomena cannot be explained using the existing fundamentals at the time, so he postulated the fundamental law of electromagnetism and postulated electric charges as a fundamental element that the new law governs. Chalmers thinks this is what needs to be done with consciousness. If it cannot be explained using the existing fundamentals, then we must expand the list. With consciousness as a fundamental building block of nature, we can then study the fundamental laws governing consciousness and connect it to other existed fundamentals.

Chalmers recognizes his naturalistic dualism as a type of property dualism and being quite distinguished from the classical kind of substance dualism like Cartesian dualism, which distinguishes the physical and the mind as two different substances that are independent of each other. Instead of distinguishing mind and physical to be two completely different substances, Chalmers suggests that there are some facts beyond our current physical knowledge and preserves the possibility that these facts will be eventually recognized as physical facts. It is stated in Chalmers's naturalistic dualism that the consciousness, or the conscious experience, is, considering the evidence provided by modern science, dependent, or naturally supervenient, on the physical. The relationship between consciousness and the physical brain is described by Chalmers as that the conscious experience arises from the physical brain while it is not per se a physical process of the brain. He believes that there is something beyond the physical facts we currently recognize being required to explain the phenomenon. By Chalmers's wish to decrease the mystery of conscious awareness and to explain it in the scientific context, it is suggested by Chalmers that there is an undiscovered fundamental feature of the world that is independent of the physical facts we currently know and able to explain the phenomenon of consciousness [3].

2. THE SOURCE OF NATURALISTIC DUALISM: THE CONFLUENCE OF NATURALISM AND DUALISM

“Naturalism” can often be equated with trends of thought such as materialism and physicalism, which is naturally incompatible with dualism. This is the most classic view. In the concept of the heart, Ryle called Cartesian dualism “the ghost in the machine”, and made many efforts to try to eliminate dualism by reduction [4]. Papineau also pointed out that for some philosophers, naturalism values the continuity between philosophy and empirical science, while others believe that the main feature of naturalism is to reject dualism. A theoretical premise of this opposing view is to regard naturalism as a theory similar to materialism and physicalism. Especially after the naturalization movement of the mind, naturalism is increasingly close to materialism and physicalism. The subtle differences in the connotation of the three can be ignored many times. Putnam casts his worry by commenting like “In analytical philosophy, the terms’ physicalism ‘and’ naturalism ‘have become synonymous with materialism” [4]. Although naturalism gives Natural Science an important position in ontology and methodology, it is different from materialism's emphasis that the world is completely composed of material particles, this has also become the basis of coherence theory.

Many philosophers believe that naturalism and dualism are in a more complex relationship than the opposition. Olafson pointed out that although naturalism does rely on negating dualism to establish its definition, and the research objects and methods of dualism are not compatible with the current natural science; But naturalism inherited the part about the body from dualism, that is, naturalism partially accepted the existence facts faced by dualism. This makes naturalism not completely separate itself from dualism “Naturalism simply denies that there are some different psychological things. Its explanatory theory of the world, however, does not answer the empirical question of ‘what is the world like’ [4]. Silas is generally considered to be the first philosopher to hold this coherent view. He points out the reality of two different attributes in the physical world by demonstrating the phenomenal nature of subjective perception. Nagel's bat argument and Jackson's knowledge argument have defended Silas to a certain extent.

3. CHALMERS' NATURALISTIC DUALISM

Chalmers more directly constructed the system of the combination of naturalism and dualism. In ontology, he pointed out that the world has both physical and non-physical characteristics [3]. he advocated the irreducibility of phenomenal consciousness through the analysis of “information” To clarify the overall structure of

consciousness theory, and advocate that information should be analyzed in natural science, which is the naturalistic side of its theoretical system; on the other hand, he gives the relatively independent ontological status of phenomenal consciousness and interprets it as the accessory attribute of the physical attribute, which is the attribute dualism side of its theoretical system.

Chalmers and Dennett's debate focused on two issues, namely "hard problem" and zombie argument.

The "hard problem" of consciousness, that is, the receptive problem, is the core of Chalmers' consciousness theory. He pointed out that the hard problem of consciousness is empirical [2]. When we think and understand, there is regular information processing, but at the same time, it is also accompanied by a main official aspect. As Nagel said, there is something of a conscious organism. While Dennett completely denied the definition of the hard problem, he advocates a functionalist point of view that the human mind is an artifact made by memes to make it a better habitat when reconstructing the human brain [5]. Thus it only needs to discuss the function of consciousness without investigating the reality from ontology. Dennett compares the difficulty of consciousness to the old theory of vitality and thinks it is a mistake. Furthermore, through the experiment of twisting the skin of his left arm with his right hand, he explained that there was no such feeling of pinch pain, to deny the first person sensitivity (subjective experience); He believes that only third-person phenomena exist in the experimental process, such as stimulus input, neuron activation, biological response [6]. The objectivity of scientific methods deduces that the brain is a high-speed computer, and consciousness is only a virtual element in the computer, without reality. He pointed out that Chalmers' explanation was an unreasonable behavior, and believed that Chalmers mistakenly constructed the concept and theory of consciousness. His proposition on the "hard problem" of consciousness is easy to ignore the role of the functional system.

Chalmers believes that the debate between him and Dennett should focus on one question, that is, "why is the function of consciousness always accompanied by conscious experience?" Chalmers believes that Dennett only retains the word consciousness in form, and the practice of denying its internal subjective essence is counter-intuitive; It is pointed out that Dennett tried to negate its existence wrongly according to the paradox of the state of consciousness, changed the concept secretly in the process of argument, and made a serious logical error. Moreover, if Dennett's view is scientific, we can be regarded as zombies without sensory experience, which is an absurd inference in the real world.

Dennett further denies the imaginability of zombies. He believes that we are no different from machines without subjective conscious experience. Neither humans nor zombies have subjective conscious experience.

Dennett believes that Chalmers' zombie argument has two necessary premises: 1) The universe can be divided into conscious and unconscious parts; 2) The existence of consciousness is a fundamental metaphysical difference. These two premises are unconvincing for us. He then gave an example of blind people. Blind people have problems with their visual system, but they sometimes describe their interesting visual behavior and admit that their oral reports on vision are not the same as normal people at every level. This makes us imagine that such patients may have neural correlates of normal visual experience, including conscious phenomenological appendages, but now they have lost visual consciousness, that is, visual function can exist in the absence of consciousness. In this sense, such patients can be regarded as zombies.

For Dennett's criticism, Chalmers countered that imagination is different from credibility [7]. Chalmers believes that unusual possibilities seem to be only logical, not credible. He believes that there may be a zombie world in which each of us has a zombie counterpart, but they are unconscious. His attitude of supporting the imaginability of unintentional people is at least partly based on the idea that human cognition and perception are essentially a process of information processing and behavior adjustment. It is quite easy to imagine the processed information and adjusted behavior in the absence of qualitative subjective accompaniment. Any negative feedback system can complete its functional tasks without subjectivity [8, 9]. This problem is similar to the phenomenology of blindness mentioned above. To some extent, the subjects of blindness can distinguish the state shown to them by the world in the blind area, but they do not have the subjective visual feeling associated with the blind area.

4. DEBATE BETWEEN CHALMERS AND SEARLE

Chalmers' dichotomy of information is largely the foreshadowing of his dualism. He divides information into physical and phenomenal categories [3, 10]. The internal aspect of information is phenomenal and the external aspect is physical. As a basic principle, the double-sided theory of information presupposes and explains the existence of experience in the physical world. Experience appears because it is a characteristic of information itself, and another characteristic of information is embedded in physical processes. Information space is abstract space, and information state is the abstract state. These spaces and states are not specific components in the physical or phenomenological world.

This double-sided theory of information implies the tendency of Pan mind theory. According to this theory, information is ubiquitous and fills the whole universe. The universality of information is due to ubiquitous causality. According to this analogy, the conscious experience should be ubiquitous. Chalmers was also aware of this and

pointed out: “Experience is much broader than what we confirmed because the information is everywhere. This is counter-intuitive at first, but based on reflection, I think this view has some rationality and simplicity. Where there is simple information processing, there is simple experience, and where there is complex information processing, there is complex experience [2-3, 11]. Specifically, he classifies conscious experience as expanded experience Information holds that all systems contain information in this extended sense. Therefore, systems have consciousness because they contain information, which is ubiquitous.

Based on this theory, Searle and Chalmers had a heated debate. Searle’s query focused on the two thought experiments proposed by Chalmers: first, for the conscious thermostat, Searle pointed out that this experiment cannot explain the combination of consciousness. If the thermostat has consciousness and each component of it has a single separation consciousness, if you want to explain these points It is difficult to integrate the consciousness into the overall consciousness of the thermostat; if the thermostat has consciousness in the overall form, and its components do not have independent separation consciousness, it is difficult to explain the basis for only making the thermostat a conscious thing.

Second, for the zombie argument, Searle pointed out that in the “zombie argument”, Chalmers should imagine a world that is the same as our world in physical characteristics but lacks consciousness (the world of zombies) At the same time, we must imagine that the laws of nature will change accordingly. Of course, we can also imagine a world with different laws of nature, for example, we can imagine a world with the same microstructure but different high-order attributes, “Such as the world where pigs can fly, the world where tables and stones have life. These worlds are some science fiction worlds, but it is not enough to show that flying life and action are not physical attributes and events.” that is to say, Searle believes that “the physical structure of the world is also coordinated with increasing flying pigs, but it cannot be deduced that flying is a non-physical feature.” Similarly, it is difficult to regard consciousness as a new feature attached to the physical world. In this way, the pan mind theory will lose its theoretical foundation of existence [12].

For the first question, Chalmers chose to limit the double-sided theory of information: regarding the thermostat as an effective causal information process system. In this way, the problem of conscious experience of the thermostat has become a problem of degree. It does not mean that the thermostat can think conscious mind. It can even express the relationship between the thermostat and conscious experience as “correlation” rather than “possession”. Although he himself has repeatedly expressed it indiscriminately; or more specifically, a

simple information system such as a thermostat can only have more fundamental original phenomenological attributes than conscious experience.

For the second question, Chalmers believes that Searle made two mistakes. First, Searle misunderstood the “zombie argument” to show that flying is a non-physical feature, we only need to show that the physical structure of the world is not contradictory to the lack of flying. This is easy to explain because the fact that people add flying to the physical world cannot deduce anything. Second, the scene described by Searle is inconsistent with the scene of unintentional people, and the two cannot be confused [12]. One of the mysteries of consciousness the world with flying pigs is different from the current physical world, which violates the original assumptions. The existence of flying pigs has caused fundamental differences in the structure of the two worlds. To put it another way, it is untenable to imagine a world that is identical to us on the physical level, but in which there is no flying, no pig, or no stone because physical identity means that flying is included. As Searle himself admits, suppose there is a world that is physically different from ours. In other words, “the status of flying pig and almost everything else in the world can be logically derived from the physical structure of the world, but the existence of consciousness cannot” [12].

5. CONCLUSION

This essay discusses the ‘neo-Cartesian trend’ in the context of the revival of property dualism in the era of the prominent results of neuroscience and physicalism is being used to investigate the problem of consciousness. By discussing Chalmers’ ‘naturalistic dualism’ theory that regards mind as a substantiated property based on complete respect for scientific results and the typical rebuttal given by Dennett and Searle from the ‘hard problem’, ‘zombie argument’ and the ‘panpsychism’, this paper argues that in these two typical debates Chalmers’ naturalistic dualism’ has an existing fundamental problem and is a new Cartesian turn in the development of the philosophical theory of mind from the point of view in the searching for the consciousness. It is argued that this turn has to some extent re-substantialize consciousness and make it more difficult to be naturalized, but at the same time complements the strong physicalist inquiry into consciousness by giving it a different interpretation to a certain extent. As an analytical essay, this essay tends to be crystallized into two typical arguments and aims to provide a typical case study for exploring the research topic of the Cartesian turn in the philosophy of mind, rather than draw highly definitive conclusions from it, which would be of great interest to scholars who are studying and needing a general background for understanding the debates on the consciousness. Finally, the question of how to locate and advance the study of consciousness is a topical issue of close interest to

philosophical theorists of the mind. The overview of Chalmers' 'naturalistic dualism' and the 'zombie argument' is an inescapable topic that this paper provides a visionary extension of it, which is revisiting it in the context of existing research.

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