

Second Philosophy

Led by	Marya Blaisdale / Maria Hume
Title	Consciousness: Is it what we think it is?
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INTRODUCTION

Descartes once said, “I think, therefore I am” and fair enough - it is incredibly difficult to even attempt to argue with this. However, perhaps this statement, in reference to consciousness, moves our minds in the potentially wrong direction.

I have been thinking about what consciousness is and the more I think about it, the more I am inclined to consider that perhaps we are mistaken in what it is. It seems quite difficult to find a clear and explicit statement on exactly what it is and it seems to be something that is taken for granted, intuitively.

Wiki Definition: *“Consciousness defies simple explanation. It has been defined loosely as a group of attributes of mind such as subjectivity, self-awareness, sentience, and the ability to perceive a relationship between oneself and one's environment”*

Why is it so hard to define it? Could it be because it is something we take for granted, we perceive it ‘intuitively’? Is it possible that this intuition could be wrong?

Each living organism has a certain number of ‘attributes’ in place, a system by which to process information about the world in which it exists. All living things have this, from the simplest biological organism to us, the complex systems attributed to the human brain. What we perceive to be consciousness is the system we have, as humans, to process that information.

So, is there a possibility that we are looking at consciousness from a slightly skewed perspective? One of perhaps a false intuition? Why are we focusing on qualia, when qualia is a part of this process? Are we trying to insert meaning where there is none? Is this just an error in wording that helps to further support an assumption (the capacity to think = consciousness), which in turn, ensures that we tend to ask the wrong questions philosophically?

Example: ...

“Hard Problem & Easy Problem: The term hard problem of consciousness, coined by David Chalmers, refers to the "hard problem" of explaining why we have qualitative phenomenal experiences. It is contrasted with the "easy problems" of explaining the ability to discriminate, integrate information, report mental states, focus attention, etc”

So by this reckoning, we are asking questions such as:

1. Why do we experience qualia and an ‘inner life’ if we don’t NEED to?
2. How is consciousness created from biological material (ie: How does ‘meat’ think?)

A possible answer could be that what we perceive to be that inner life, that conscious experience, is the way in which we process information about the world in which we exist. There doesn’t seem to be a great mystery there. This is a purely physical, biological process. The same sort of process that all life forms have, only ours, as humans with a highly evolved brain, are able to experience more complex levels of that process.

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And the answer to question 2 can be address by perhaps noting a flaw in the question – meat doesn't think, that is not the implication of this. Meat or living biological material reacts to its environment in the way that it is biologically structured to react. And the more complex the organism, the more complex this system is likely to be. By asking if meat can think, are we not creating a straw man, and why is the process of thinking necessarily indicative of consciousness? Perhaps it only 'seems' to point to consciousness because that is the intuitive response and perhaps it is so hard to define because it is not what we seem to think it is.

These 'hard' questions appear to be based on an assumption that consciousness as we know it, the capacity to think, is something MORE than the functioning of a complex biological system. What is the basis for this assumption outside of intuition?

REFERENCES:

Daniel Dennett on Consciousness

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjbWr3ODbAo>

<http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/explainingmagic.pdf>

Dr. V.S. Ramachandran

Director of the Centre for Brain and Cognition at UCSD, discusses Consciousness, Qualia, and Self

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTWmTJALe1w>

Evolution and the cognitive neuroscience of awareness, consciousness and language:

<http://www.hedweb.com/bgcharlton/awconlang.html>

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DISCUSSION:

Elfed: We are looking at consciousness from the inside out, Marya. When we look at neural systems we are looking from the outside in.

Steve: Marya can you explain what you mean by "if we don't NEED to?"

Pun: Well, I think the world would work even without consciousness. Imagine highly sophisticated robots instead of us.

Marya: Steve, if we biologically react anyway, why do we need to experience qualia - that is what that particular question related to.

Steve: afraid I still don't get it

Elfed: We do need to - organisms that have evolved to have an inner life must have an evolutionary advantage

Deoridhe: Well, around the topic of sophisticated robots - the theory that a sufficiently complex program or machine could achieve consciousness implies that we think consciousness is something different from complexity.

Shingles: Are we thinking of consciousness as an appendix or a consequence?

Marya: Also, that isn't my question - that is a commonly asked question in philosophy of mind

Simulat: Pun - if the Robot behaved in a way similar to us, and were as sophisticated - why would we say it wasn't conscious?

Issakar: Isn't the question either

Renald: Sim, anti-robot bias, perhaps? :-)

Pun: Well, when I say consciousness, I mean 'awareness'.

Marya: Steve, I'll give you an example - our reflex actions are not consciously controlled

Deoridhe: I think part of the problem is we don't have ONE operational definition of consciousness.

Deoridhe: gets semantics out of the way. ;)

Pun: Not 'awareness' as in 'reacting to stimuli', but awareness in the sense of really being aware of something.

Steve: do you mean why is there consciousness rather than no consciousness?

Renald: Deo, you just hit several nails on the head.

Elfed: Marya, experiencing qualia is simply what it feels like to be responding to the world

Simulat: Pun - how do you describe the fact that most animals are also aware if for you consciousness is the same as awareness

Alaya: I don't see the need of qualia related to consciousness, but more of other level of being

Marya: I know Elfed - I am asking why this question is being asked

Dar: you can respond to the world without experiencing qualia; so, equating the two is mistaken, in my opinion

Steve: how Dar?

Reflection: well Pun, awareness might be a complex reacting to stimuli?

Pun: Simulat - the animals feel; they're not just lifeless organic constructs.

Elfed: Every organism must have some qualia - including spiders

Dar: well, I've slept walked, and even been told I had conversations and such, though I was not conscious

Deoridhe: Actually, from what I've seen, heard, and experienced, consciousness is LESS than awareness because an aspect of consciousness is that things have been filtered out of or added to it based on preconceived expectations.

Alaya: qualia is the attributes of the body or the mind but not of consciousness

Elfed: Otherwise, how / why would they react to external threats?

Marya: Steve, I am asking if we are understanding consciousness incorrectly - and by asking a question like "why do we experience qualia if we don't need to" - I am saying "Is that not the wrong question"

Steve: qualia, as Ramachandran says implies an "I" or self experiencing

Alaya: we are conscious of qualia

Elfed: Marya, I for one agree it is the wrong question

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Simulat: Elfed - the problem with the idea of qualia is that they sort of pretend that there is someplace in the brain where aspects of the world are represented

Deoridhe: I'm not sure we are, Alaya. There is some evidence that by the time something reaches consciousness in most humans, qualia has been filtered and altered.

Simulat: but there doesn't seem to be such a place

Elfed: Exactly Simulat

Simulat: instead we just respond to the world

Oswy: Marya could it be that Qualia contribute something to us?

Renald: Deo... are what gets filtered out really qualia, then?

Alaya: sure qualia is filtered by other qualia ... hehe

Steve: What is the question that might be the "wrong" question?

Dar: so, the red we see is in the world itself sim?

Magita: Please frame comments to leave open the possibility that the body is the mind

Simulat: so why would we need the idea of qualia

Elfed: I guess without qualia we could not enjoy art

Simulat: it's our response to what we see Dar

Deoridhe: I don't know, Ren, I'm still coping with the fact that I have to remove my thoughts in order to really see the world accurately.

Pun: I don't understand why you (I mean Simulat and Reflection) seem to consider a highly sophisticated piece of silicon and metal to be equally alive as a human being.

Marya: Yes it does contribute I think Oswy - but I think that contribution is not at all mysterious and the fact that we experience qualia, should not encourage a 'hard question' - I think it is simply part of our complex processing system

Dar: seeing red is our response to seeing red?

Simulat: we respond differently to red and green

Shingles: maybe a representation is physical in the sense that it manifests in the brain as activity rather than an area of the brain

Alaya: but I don't think we need to ask about qualia in order to define consciousness, but rather to define what is not consciousness

Simulat: responding to red things is what our eyes do

Marya: yes, Sim, agreed

Simulat: and we react to red things as if they were red

Deoridhe: Shingles, are you talking about different ways to measure brain activity? Like EEGs and such?

Elfed: In fact, without qualia we could not distinguish colours, see beauty in our offspring and friends, and hence could not be the social animals we are today

Oswy: Marya unless qualia are epiphenomenal then they are part of a process how we access the process seems to cause us problems it seems to cause a mystery to arise.

Renald: Sim, might they not as well be red?

Marya: A lot going on so if I've missed anything directed at me - please just copy and paste it in

Shingles: just thinking about what Sim said about qualia, maybe a representation could be measured as activity instead of matter, Deo

Reflection: well pun what if it were equally complex to a human being?

Steve: where does the word, experience of "consciousness" come from? if not from our own consciousness

Pun: IMO, it's just a piece of silicon and metal.

Deoridhe: Technically, Pun, we're just pieces of carbon and oxygen.

Simulat: Renald - I think of the experience of red as a way of measuring what we see - and for me that act of measuring doesn't need the mystery of qualia

Steve: which only happens qualia-tatively ie with an I that experiences, Oswy

Oswy: Ramachadaran does not seem to have a problem fitting Qualia into a process

Shingles: doesn't the 'meat' thing just describe our matter, not our activity?

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Dar: consciousness dismissed, consciousness explained away

Renald: Sim, no, I don't need a mystery there either :-)

Pun: Deoridhe, I think we're more than that. There are robots which can adapt their behaviour to what they perceive with their sensors, but I don't think they're really conscious.

Steve: he says it is the Holy Grail

Deoridhe: Not really, Shingles. The "activity" is movements of salts, potassium, and other elements...

Steve: to understand the process

Alaya: the meat doesn't describe the invisible

Shingles: and electrons, Deo

Pun: Don't you think that the fact that you're aware of yourself implies you're something more than a highly sophisticated organic machine?

Deoridhe: The electrons are part of the elements, Shingles, the charges and lack of charges... though I have to admit I have a strong emotional reaction at thinking of myself as something mechanical instead of something with identity and meaning.

Alaya: the qualia is the seen or felt or anything that is data, conceptualised by the meat.... but not the witness

Steve: how you get to first person experience from third person processes

Renald: Are we committed to material priority, then?

Dar: so, our experience tells us of electrons and brains and such, and we let our experiences give testimony to what they themselves are fun

Marya: I am not saying there is no consciousness per se - I am saying I think it is misunderstood - that perhaps using the word 'consciousness' tends to invoke an intuitive reaction to what it is - making it seem like something mysterious and difficult to understand - when it could well just be a more complex system of events taking place - no different to a massively complex machine and no different to anything that even the most basic life form has

Shingles: but neural activity is transference of electrons, is it not, Deo?

Simulat: no Pun - I think that the fact that I am aware of myself means that I am a highly sophisticated biological machine

Deoridhe: That's the question, Pun. If something made of silicon and metal can achieve self awareness, though, does that not imply consciousness THERE as well?

Alaya: I agree that consciousness is permeated, old stuck

Steve: let's discuss human consciousness Marya

Simulat: other biological machines aren't as sophisticated and don't seem to be aware of themselves

Deoridhe: Yes, Shingles, but the electrons don't exist in a *cough* vacuum.

Reflection: Pun, we are a long way from robots that even begin to approach the sophistication/complexity of the human brain of course, but a more basic issue, might be is the "life" of a paramecium essentially different than that of a "construction" that did all the same things?

Oswy: I think one of the problems is that we use scientific reductionism in an inappropriate way. We try to reduce the mental to physics and that just wont work.

Steve: this is the only consciousness we have an experience of first hand

Issakar: Many of you appear to be looking at it too much from outside consciousness, taking for granted sensation, intuition, rationality... We're miles away from Marya's initial question when we raise question about the material constitution of the mind

Shingles: I'm thinking that this 'activity' of salts and electrons and other stuff in a complex way creates 'consciousness', even if it is an illusion, Dar & Deo

Dar: agreed Oswy

Pun: I don't think there's any valid way to assume that something is conscious without experiencing your own consciousness, too, and concluding that some other entity, similar to you, is also conscious, simply because it's so similar to you.

Marya: I want to apply this to ALL living things Steve, because I believe it applies to all living things and not just humans - I am trying to say that we are not special

Renald: Issakar, I've been thinking similar things

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Issakar: The question is about consciousness capacity to grasp at reality, not, taking for granted reality, how does consciousness exist

Issakar: consciousness' capacity*

Magita: why not all dead things?

Pun: A program can be probably programmed to seem self-aware, but it was programmed to behave in a way that makes its creator believe it's self aware.

Oswy: Ramachandran talks about a hierarchy of reductionism and Davidson's idea of Anomalous Monism is seeking the same sort of answer.

Steve: well let's start first with us since this is what is given

Deoridhe: I think that's the current, scientific, "objective" point o view, Shingles. I'm not sure I'm willing to accept it, no matter how rationally it may be presented.

Marya: Magita, because at this point in the conversation, applying it to dead things is probably not useful :)

Simulat: I agree Oswy - but that's just because you will never understand psychology by contemplating atoms - but I don't think there can be no doubt that our brains are made of atoms and that all that we do is the result of the interactions of those atoms

Alaya: consciousness also refer to something and not a verb attribute... and qualia to what it witnesses, so the act of witnessing...isn't a thing to understand but an action...lasting

Steve: and the question is we are first person experiencers

Issakar: Qualia is a useful starting point, but it takes for granted sensation

Steve: how?

Pun: There's no direct evidence of consciousness any of us ever had, except our own consciousness.

Simulat: psychology operates at a different logical level than atoms do

Steve: yes Pun

Renald: Pun, bingo

Shingles: I said 'if' it's an illusion, I'm still seeking a way to think and show that it is not an illusion, Deo ;)

Dar: I think that's the real issue, consciousness is a given, so fundamental to our mental life that we cut ourselves off if we try to dig deeper.

Magita: Well, then I'm excluded from this conversation. I believe consciousness explains all of existence (planets, rocks, living beings etc)

Alaya: in the old scripture they refer to an verb... as being... but still a verb

Deoridhe: I'm not sure of that, Sim, especially if you take the sidestep into metaphor.

Magita: this conversation must first address what is SENSE

Simulat: but Pun - you can say for the same reason that we have no direct evidence of anything

Issakar: Actually, I'd start more rudimentary. What is experience?

Marya: you may be right Magita - but I am trying to start at one point and not cover too much just yet

Alaya: being conscious....

Pun: I guess I can.

Steve: no only of our experience of things, Sim

Shingles: well, evidence is a pretty loose term, Pun, Renald & Steve

Steve: we do experience things

Patrick: Does the fact that some (those with various mental illnesses) are not as sentient as others suggest that consciousness is tied to something organic?

Alaya: I prefer witnessing

Shingles: legally, 'evidence' includes all kinds of whacky stuff

Steve: something "as" something

Marya: Yes, I would think so Patrick

Steve: this is because things mean something to us

Simulat: we do also experience things as being conscious - just as much as we experience things as being red
Steve

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Issakar: Patrick, those with mental illnesses still experience and have the capacity for thought, which is basically the sort of consciousness we're discussing

Oswy: We seem to get tied in knot about evidence for consciousness when it is all around us. The first person qualia is evidenced in the huge body of poetry that exists in the world. Of course the physicists don't want to consider this as evidence.

Steve: I am afraid not sim

Deoridhe: I would vehemently argue that people with mental illnesses are JUST as sentient as anyone.

Shingles: TY, Oswy

Deoridhe: And arguing otherwise is hugely offensive to them/us as people.

Steve: I only experience my own consciousness as my own

Alaya: the difference of interpretation doesn't make the witnessing less witnessing

Steve: I can not experience your consciousness as you are experiencing it

Dar: well, confusing cognitive ability and consciousness is an old fallacy Deo

Issakar: Agreed, Deo. Sentience is not tied to emotional state or lacking in the degree of certain faculties

Marya: I think what Patrick means is that they are not as aware of the world around them as someone that is not brain damaged, Deo

Simulat: nobody doubts that we perceive the world Oswy - what the argument is about is whether we need the idea of qualia to explain our perception

Dar: peeps do that all the time

Magita: yes, Patrick...but those same scientists believe in a definitive atom as a real particle...despite it equalling "energy" (after multiplying itself by a really big constant)...advanced physics more and more realizes that "matter" is more akin to energy in its behaviour

Oswy: Steve I think we have to accept other minds to make progress in this argument.

Steve: I can infer that you are since we speak together - why accept

Alaya: as an artist interprets a song, he still sing

Deoridhe: Dar, I've met people with schizophrenia who can give me a run for my money IQ wise. Mental illness is something other than IQ or sentience.

Magita: like a quantum leap

Simulat: but I think that the idea of qualia is an explanation that doesn't explain

Shingles: because 'Evidence' can be something that shows a thing to be in operation, not the principle that it shows

Dar: definitely Deo

Steve: let's just say we are in the world with one another

Issakar: IQ is not indicative of sentience

Shingles: IQ is a ero-biased test

Deoridhe: Hence the "or" in the sentence, Issakar.

Patrick: Is the person who is born to a vegetative state and never goes beyond it as conscious as he who recognizes and acknowledge his own existence and that of others

Dar: sim, qualia is just a label for what is directly sensed

Steve: we see it from our own perspective

Shingles: well Caucasoid-biased

Oswy: Simulat my point is that poetry and creative literature and art provide evidence for qualia. They are expressions of qualia

Dar: when you smell a rose, you do not smell chemicals interacting with the nose, you smell a scent

Magita: what's amazing about our consciousness, to me, is the ability to store senses for later retrieval

Issakar: Taking for granted the scent

Deoridhe: Except arguably, Dar, when we go there... SOMETHING interprets the chemicals. It just isn't a conscious interpretation.

Shingles: what something interprets it then, Deo?

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Simulat: if it were that Dar I wouldn't complain - but people seem to take it for more than just a label - they seem to use it in the sense that our experience creates qualia within us

Dar: something has translated that interaction with chemicals into a representation that we can sense

Deoridhe: Good question, Shingles. Something we are so unaware of that it isn't until errors occur in it that we even realize it might exist.

Simulat: and I don't understand why its just not possible to say that we experience and leave qualia out of it

Alaya: witnessing was translated by the presence at.... but its an different meaning for a few.... to be present at can have various degree of listening to... but still being there on the event place...is an act of qualia doesn't refer unto the act in it self but to the data collection which is something else

Magita: yes...and I've tried to imagine what a bee sees when it sees the world and I came up with a world in which there are blocks of heat patterns...the same objective space we live in is perceived very differently by differing consciousnesses

Oswy: Dar the smell can be described very well in terms of strict physical laws but you will never get to the mental that way. I am not saying the physical is an inadequate account, its just one sort of account.

Simulat: we don't experience qualia - we experience the world

Marya: It is an amazing system Magita - but is there anything in that system that a machine could not do?

Shingles: doesn't the bits of the brain connected to your olfactory do what this 'something' we're talking about do?

Issakar: Taking for granted physicality, taking for granted not only the appearance of atoms, but also our ability to cognate physical things atomically. Again, this isn't quite the question at hand

Deoridhe: I think experience includes our conclusions about a sensation, Sim.

Dar: Oswy, we are on the same side here

Issakar: Agreed Deo

Steve: the world is qualitatively experienced

Dar: there is no way physics alone can account for the scent of a rose, definitely

Shingles: trying to separate noses and brains would be a very tricky business

Marya: you see this is where I think it goes wrong - separating the physical experience and calling it something 'mental'

Reflection: well sim the human experiencing is such a creative process, moment to moment and the complex intuitive elements of this may deserve recognition, which qualia, relates to I think

Steve: it is Ramachandran's business

Simulat: yeah - I should have said that our sense data stimulates us to experience - as opposed to saying that our sense data create qualia that we experience

Deoridhe: I think there's a point at the micro level where trying to separate anything is tricky....

Marya: and by saying it is a 'mental experience' we are suggesting that it is not physical

Deoridhe: It all seems to exist in gradients.

Alaya: Dar the roses need a present to witness her sent.....

Magita: but if those "chemicals" are in fact a larger part of consciousness themselves...then our sense is an interaction within a consciousness...and depending on each sentient's PATTERN we perceive objective reality subjectively

Steve: there is no evidence for sense data Sim

Magita: though there's still an objective reality

Alaya: it's interrelated....

Steve: it is an abstraction and a presupposition

Simulat: I think that that is wrong Steve

Magita: its nature could never be defined definitively

Steve: go on and say why, please

Simulat: the fact that we respond pretty accurately to the world is evidence that we have sense data

Steve: it is evidence that we experience the world no?

Magita: but a bee reacts accurately to the world

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Dar: sense data is another expression used to denote qualia

Oswy: Marya nobody is separating anything the two mental and physical are supervenient. They just require different sorts of descriptions. It's the insistence on mono descriptions of phenomena that causes the problem.

Dar: in my book at least

Magita: but the see in an entirely different spectrum

Steve: not the same "world"

Simulat: and for instance - the way that the eye responds to the world has been analysed a lot - why would you not call the information that the eyes provide sense data Steve?

Shingles: I reckon, as Marya seems to suggest, that the nose could not be wholly distinct from the brain, as without either of them, 'smelling' could not occur, To Whom It May Concern

Steve: Magita; I would call the analysis data; based on the experience; after the fact

Simulat: I disagree Dar - if the word was used that way I'd have no quibble - but that's not the way its used - its used as if its an intermediary of some sort between sense data and experience

Marya: I would agree that we need better ways of describing things Oswy - I do think that the wording that is used in every day life really does skew the way people think about things

Simulat: That is that sense data create qualia that we experience

Dar: well, sim, stop assuming I use the word the way you think I use the word then

Oswy: Shingles I think you are making the same mistake as Marya in seeing a separation where none exists.

Simulat: and it seems more reasonable to me to just say that we just experience our sense data

Marya: I am not seeing a separation Oswy - I absolutely believe it is all a physical process. Why do you think I am seeing a separation?

Dar: the scent of the rose is quite distinct from the chemicals interacting with the rose.

Steve: show me a sense data Sim to experience

Shingles: Ever since this mind-body separation idea, we're SO inclined not to see the human body as a unified thing, whereas the evidence to that is to the contrary, the whole is greater than its parts, not to suggest that mind-body separation didn't progress thinking, it did, but we ought to take what we've learned from it and move on

Dar: with the nose

Simulat: if you have a different meaning for the word than I do Dar then that's just confusing, and that very confusion is a good reason to drop the word

Dar: to me a qualia or a sense datum is what is experienced

Magita: The body is the mind Shingles; there is only the mind in all things

Marya: yes, this is the thing - the wording can often be rather ambiguous - which creates more problems

Simulat: Steve - tell me how you think we get information about the world without sense data?

Steve: don't think so Dar

Dar: I experience scents, images, flavours, sounds, kinaesthetic sensations, emotions, and the like

Reflection: perhaps this issue is so important, and drawing these distinctions is so imperative, because people do powerfully identify with their consciousness and consider it to be causal in the world (as Descartes did), and it is pretty clear, now from the triangulation of several areas of science and philosophy, that consciousness is not causal (for the most part)

Shingles: Well, I disagree, I think that without the body there is no mind, but after that, I reckon we see things quite similarly, Magita

Steve: no one that I know ever experienced a sense data

Magita: everything we know about everything including ourselves comes from our senses

Oswy: Marya I agree it is physical but you are implying either that it must have either a physical description ie reductionism or that people are making a mistake when they refer to the mental and try to give a non strict physical law description of that . You can't describe the whole phenomena in terms of strict physical laws.

Steve: it is a category mistake

Renald: sense datum

Steve: yes

Magita: ok Shingles

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Steve: the result of analysis

Simulat: Steve - where does our information about the world come from?

Magita: but let's look into that

Dar: it seems that this is a linguistic cluster****

Alaya: we have another field body, before the physical one, in hierarchy..... that is capturing the world data before the body itself

Shingles: for now, Magita ;)

Issakar: Agreed Dar

Magita: if you looked at our "brain" or the complexity of our "bodies"

Deoridhe: And I thought I got semantics out of the way...

Issakar: This debate is madness. Positivists over there, Continentals over there, closet-Idealists there

Simulat: how do we get it Steve and how do we process it?

Magita: the aggregate interactions create the "mind" to you, right?

Shingles: I think that's fair, yes

Magita: but each individual "molecule" is lesser than the mind?

Alaya: the intuition prove it, before a phone ringing, some of us can know who is calling... before the data is coming physically before it ring even

Shingles: of course, yes

Marya: well, the purpose of these debates is to flesh out these ideas - see where the train of thought goes, Issakar :)

Steve: comes from an empirical tradition - suppositions

Dar: thing is, we cannot debate anything because we do not share a common vocabulary

Issakar: Or a common starting point

Magita: now...pretend (just for the sake of argument"...that planets are atoms...and all the spinning around in all the billions of galaxies...together form a consciousness; I'm not saying that's true; but could it be true in your belief system?

Oswy: Issakar not sure where I fit in your taxonomy? Haha

Dar: and, we are not willing to step back and negotiate a common vocabulary

Shingles: it's a pretty unrelated example, Magita

Issakar: Closet or conscious continental (smirks)

Dar: those peeps are married to those terms in that way, and other peeps are married to other terms in other ways

Marya: Yes Dar, as I said before, I think a lot of the problems we have, not just in philosophical discussion - is a problem in wording

Renald: Too much ego-invested, Dar

Magita: I believe it is very relevant

Steve: that we primary and secondary sense data is Locke

Alaya: the physical field is the last one.. the end of the creation.... thing are created before ending into matter... so the body get the data is an effect....

Dar: we may as well be having a negotiation between a dog and a worm

Magita: because you said that the mind needs a "body"

Oswy: What is a conscious continental when he she is at home? (Smirks back)

Alaya: not a starting point

Simulat: Steve - I've tried my best to give a brief account of how we respond to the world - and you disagree - which is fine - but I have no idea about what your own account is like

Magita: but your body is made up of particles (which forms patterns) that magically form consciousness

Steve: that we experience the world as a given in a field of consciousness

Simulat: do you have one? Or are you just in denial about mine?

Steve: around an I or self

Oswy: Simulat can you recap briefly sorry getting lost in the complexity of debate?

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Alaya: our respond to the world is not to the world actually, its to something that take place physically after... we respond to something before that on an other sensitive level

Steve: this is the phenomenological starting point

Pun: It's not a good argument on my part, but I'd like to note that this idea of matter forming consciousness is originally Lenin's idea, IIRC.

Simulat: Oswy - I'll lay it out in Facebook - I'm trying to understand Steve now

Magita: a priori, these constituent molecules are as impersonal as desolate planets are

Steve: evidence is given

Oswy: Simulat OK

Steve: the given as given

Alaya: the materialisation isn't containing the starting point, but the ending point of the action that happened, like the emotional aspect can later have effect into the body

Dar: well, we only know of matter via consciousness. To use matter then to explain consciousness.... doesn't that seem to anyone else to be rather circular?

Shingles: What I'd like to point out is in science and indeed geometry, when you increase the input data, often the effect is not simply a cumulative output, but an exponential one, and couldn't this be true of how this mind/body works? The variables interact to create something exponentially constructed and phenomenal from relatively base actions, but look at the result of this complex interaction, a walking talking thinking human being, I'm not saying that we simply cant describe that yet, but its natural that understanding it from understand its base interactions would mislead us into understanding the human

Reflection: Pun, did something other than matter, form consciousness?

Magita: my point is: consciousness forms from energy (which we can all agree everywhere... $e=mc^2$) in a specific PATTERN that allows sense

Steve: so what we are experiencing no is a computer screen with a second live SL philo tableau etc

Issakar: Precisely, Dar

Oswy: Steve, you are aware of the myth of the given. Nothing is given without conceptualisation?

Magita: I like where you're going Shingles

Alaya: if the material aspect is the beginning or thre data...why emotion have effect later into the body

Steve: so I see your avatar and you see mine

Deoridhe: I'd be inclined to agree, Shingles.

Oswy: The Myth of the Given?

Steve: how so myth, Oswy? Myth of isolated mind yes

Pun: $E=mc^2$ is useful for calculating energy in the cases where some matter disappears, or mass created by disappearance of energy, but I don't see how it could be used for explanation of consciousness.

Simulat: how is the given given Steve?

Steve: as given

Alaya: so the bodily sensory data are witnessed after the happening

Magita: well c is just a constant

Shingles: precisely, Pun

Magita: the speed of light I think but a constant nevertheless

Steve: just as you are experiencing it

Magita: so $m=energy$ divided by a really big number (that is probably only relevant to us)

Pun: Yes. And E is usually kinetic energy created by disappearance of mass, or kinetic energy lost on creation of new mass 'm'.

Alaya: and we can intuitionate thing before the physical happening witch mean the taking place of the event is not physical

Simulat: yes Steve - that which is given is given, but what is giving and what is getting and how does the getter get the gift?

Oswy: It's a myth that we directly experience the world as raw sensory data. What we experience is the world mediated via our conceptualisation of it. It comes from Fish and McDowell.

Second Philosophy

Patrick: I cannot separate this discussion from what we know about is body and mind. True there are other senses that are not cognitive, but all senses are sorted and interpreted in the brain. So what is consciousness for those who are severely brain damaged? If the answer is they have none, then consciousness is organic.

Steve: sure, Oswy

Magita: so excluding the constant for clarity's sake... $e=mc^2$ for all intents and purposes (and $m=e$) unless you need to calculate the e or m

Steve: this is what I have been saying - no sense data

Dar: $e=mc^2$ has nothing to do with kinetic energy, as the kinetic energy of m in $e=mc^2$ is 0. $e=mc^2$ is a simplification that deals with rest mass only. What does this have to do with consciousness?

Shingles: I think they would have diminished consciousness, rather than conscious/non-conscious, Patrick

Marya: Yes Patrick, that makes sense

Steve: we experience the noise of cars, and the notes of a piano

Oswy: Steve Sorry if I misunderstood you.

Alaya: the physical taking place is for the material aspect to exist ... but it's not where its happening... therefore consciousness start somewhere else

Simulat: I have no problem with the fact that our concepts modulate our reaction to data - but that doesn't mean that when my eyes see red and that when I see red that I'm responding to sense data

Magita: yes...for kinetic energy to be quantified, something must exist, some kind of matter; looking only at the matter for a moment

Alaya: it's like the feet of the consciousness, where there is a ground..

Steve: you see a red light or a green light

Pun: Dar, it does have something with kinetic energy, as in many cases when this relation is useful kinetic energy is converted to new mass (collisions of protons in supercolliders), or mass is turned into kinetic energy of molecules (creation of heat via nuclear reactions, as heat is actually directly related to kinetic energy of molecules in a substance).

Steve: why interpose a story of data?

Magita: we may see its nature by thinking of it not in terms of an actual particle

Alaya: but there is also the emotional level, not physical, and the thought.. not physical,,

Magita: but to see it simply as energy was my point; but we're getting sidetracked I think

Issakar: You are

Marya: Alaya, do you think emotions are not physical?

Simulat: what is being modulated by our concepts Steve if not data ?

Shingles: if consciousness is pure energy, does electricity have self-awareness, Magita?

Steve: neither concepts or precepts

Issakar: How is it that consciousness experiences a theory such as $E=MC^2$?

Oswy: Issakar was that an answer to my previous question?

Magita: I don't believe I ever said consciousness is pure energy

Issakar: And determines its veracity?

Magita: I said its energy of a certain pattern

Issakar: Just reiterating

Pun: Although, it's not energy in the physical sense, I hope?

Shingles: I apologise

Magita: patternism is a growing field in philosophy

Alaya: energy is like descending into density level, but is also as our conscious at more subtill level that t the physical level, where we use to make data

Pun: Or did you mean 'energy' in the physical sense here?

Steve: rather remembered presents as recatogorization through language acquisition

Shingles: I'd be interested in patternism, I think

Alaya: like water and mist....

Steve: Gerald Edleman is good on this

Second Philosophy

Marya: what does he say Steve

Pun: Because in physics, energy is simply a quantity that is preserved no matter what happens with a system.

Steve: Bright Air Brilliant Fire

Dar: well, I sense stuff. That's pretty rock solid to me. What is this state of sensing stuff? Who knows

Alaya: in physics its physic.... now it's getting less of that

Steve: that we recategorize to experience a so called "present"

Shingles: Nobody knows, but we're all thinking about it, Dar

Steve: need language

Dar: what is this I that sense? What is this stuff I sense? All pretty mysterious. Still, I sense stuff

Magita: can I ask the room a question? Is the nature of consciousness to expand (expand in the sense of growing awareness...but also expand in an abstract way for unintelligent sentient creatures (such as the aforementioned bee) by means of sexual promulgation?

Steve: as Ramachandran also says

Simulat: I shake my head in amazement - I haven't understood at all why Steve says that there is no such thing as sense data

Magita: but in general...does consciousness expand?

Steve: trying to say it is made up, invented as an instrument of empirical explanation - we do not nor never have nor ever will experience a sense data

Oswy: Dar I don't think either are mysterious once you allow for alternative descriptions to the strictly physical ie that governed by strict physical laws. They can still be physical descriptions but on a looser basis.

Simulat: that our experience is invented? And how does it come that this invented experience corresponds to the world Steve?

Shingles: well yes, if there were no humans there'd be no data, but that doesn't lead to a great deal more, Steve

Magita: Steve...I've read your arguments but I'm confused

Steve: go on

Alaya: I think it's not expanding.... but becoming full, maturation in growth.... as you body do

Dar: Sim, Steve and you simply haven't negotiated a protocol for the exchange of ideas. You simply assume you have already, and act as though you have, but you haven't

Pun: Magita, I've heard and read about spirituality, and it seems that spiritualists believe it does constantly expand. It can also contract, but it's sort of used to the state of greatest expansion it's been until the current moment.

Steve: about, Magita?

Magita: don't you agree that everything we know of the world and of ourselves comes from sense data?

Shingles: ie The Tree Does Not Fall in the Woods

Steve: no I do most certainly not agree

Magita: good thought pun

Reflection: Magita, that humans are aware of the cosmos around us suggests expansion as compared to paramecium

Magita: I don't know how to think about it

Steve: no such thing

Simulat: Dar - that's what I'm trying to do - figure out what he means

Alaya: does your brain expand when you are maturing? Not really, it's only arriving at a maturation ... a limited one

Steve: a made up scientific story

Magita: who agrees w/ Steve?

Dar: well, convo is rather hectic to get down to that sort of work I believe

Marya: I think it's hard to figure it out Steve, because it is broken up into a few words here and there and it's hard to try to read it straight through amongst other text

Simulat: is that different from trying to negotiate a protocol?

Magita: I want to talk about Steve's ideas if it's ok

Second Philosophy

Patrick: Steve, I believe there can be consciousness without language, but I do not believe there can be sentience without language. My dog can be aware he exists but he cannot exist without language.

Reflection: Magita, the progression of awareness expands through dimensions of both space and time through evolution of species

Magita: because I always saw it as only sense

Simulat: but whenever I ask him a key question he doesn't answer

Magita: Nietzsche says that everything we know comes only from our senses

Steve: not sure to what question

Alaya: we can talk for ourself in that particular aspect, but not for the whole world...

Magita: yeah reflection

Shingles: ooh, I think that's mistaken, Magita

Patrick: express an idea without language

Magita: there are different types of expansion is what you're saying?

Steve: you mean you want me to explain where experience comes from?

Dar: well, let's start at the beginning. What is it you call the scents you see, or the images you see sim?

Magita: everything I know of the world comes from my senses

Dar: and Steve

Shingles: there is no sense-organ for 'hunger', for example, Magi

Steve: no

Simulat: Steve, the last one I asked was that if we just invent our experience - then how do you account that our experience corresponds to the world?

Shingles: but I know when I'm hungry

Steve: it comes from your experience

Magita: if tonight I lost my sense of sight...the next day my sense of smell...then touch...then taste....then sound...I don't think I would know anything about my surroundings

Alaya: we also have more subtle level of being and it's not physical data

Shingles: you'd know if you got hungry, Magita

Magita: you know when you're hungry because you feel stomach pangs

Steve: you have a field of experience say a garden you then smell a rose it is foreground against the garden

Magita: there's a sense; you feel

Simulat: how does the invention correspond to the world Steve? If its an invention then it seems that its not likely it would

Magita: that tells you you're hungry

Steve: or background

Shingles: oh, so we add pain receptors to the never ending list of senses now, Magita?

Magita: no...

Shingles: there must be like 30 senses by now

Alaya: the physical data gathering is for the ground level of our consciousness

Deoridhe: I lost half of my sense of taste for a while, and it was so disconcerting that I couldn't eat until I knew that was what happened.

Reflection: well, sim, some of us may not correspond very closely to the "world" of course, schizophrenics maybe, members of the other political party, members of another religion ;-)

Magita: "receptors" are our way of viewing the phenomenon

Oswy: Simulat one answer is that there is no gap between mind and the world because we conceptualise the world and the world is open to our conceptualisation. McDowell.

Magita: of sense

Vajra: lol Ref

Magita: yes...if you lacked all 5 senses...you most certainly would die

Simulat: yes Reflection - but even schizophrenics can find the doorknob when they want to open a door

Oswy: That's why there is no given unmediated outside of concepts in the space of reasons.

Second Philosophy

Dar: what about people in comas?

Magita: if not by hunger...then by way of something else

Shingles: but that conceptual world never describes the universe completely, does it, Oswy?

Dar: they are not actively sensing the environment with any of the five senses

Vajra: McDowell very Kantian on your description, Oswy

Steve: except I would say experience rather than "conceptualization" Oswy

Deoridhe: Actually, Magita, once the understanding of what was going on was available to me, I functioned quite well.

Alaya: Deoridhe I lost the smell regularly, and there is another data capacity that is there.... more subtle

Steve: our experience is our openness to the word

Oswy: McDowell owes a lot to Kant agreed. Shingles it describes what we know of it

Shingles: my point entirely, Oswy ;)

Deoridhe: How did you lose your sense of smell, Alaya, and what did you find about how it changed what you did?

Oswy: Nothing wrong with a little Kant by the way.

Magita: anosmia?

Vajra: true enough Oswy

Issakar: Nothing at all wrong with a little Kant

Shingles: lol - I get it

Deoridhe: I found I enjoyed having half taste once I knew that was happening, and spent entire meals moving food from one side of my mouth to the other so I could see how taste changed my perception of what I was eating or drinking.

Magita: yeah...system builders are great lol

Marya: Okay - I could not possibly summarise but - I would like to ask if anyone thinks that people generally do perceive consciousness in perhaps a somewhat skewed manner - that it all is a system of complex processes taking place?

Alaya: for the visual deficit is the same, but also the body develop another branches into one of the sensory nerves that are link to another sense - like the ear become link to the visual neurons

Oswy: Shingles the space of reason includes how we could describe what we don't empirically know. We are not entirely groping in the dark.

Simulat: I think that Marya

Deoridhe: I agree, Marya.

Steve: I do too, Marya, only that is only part

Dar: I don't presume to know what consciousness is, so agreeing that it is a bunch of complex processes would be intellectually dishonest

Marya: You don't have to presume to know anything Dar - I'm asking you for your opinion :)

Vajra: Marya, very plausible

Shingles: Oh yes, I agree, I think that this conceptual world is actually very efficient when the logic works, Oswy

Reflection: absolutely Marya, that people can all so vigorously perceive reality differently (as in this discussion) suggests that all perspectives cannot be right (and probably all of them are quite wrong), even this one ;-)

Alaya: the freshness is more important when the smell is lost, the feeling is more about according the lifes into the food more raw get tasteful, cook taste less... strangely

Magita: I think I agree, but I feel Dar's agnosticism

Issakar: Not to mention, the intellect, especially when in a self-reflective mode, possibly constitutes a fraction, at best, of consciousness' activity

Deoridhe: I'm not sure that follows, Reflection. People can be right in multiple, conflicting directions if one stops assuming there is a single objective reality that is unchanging from all angles to perceive.

Alaya: well the brain, tell me all is cardboard

Issakar: But, we're philosophers, that is what we do, no?

Second Philosophy

Steve: Why can't we all be right and different Reflection?

Alaya: giggles don't listen to that...

Deoridhe: Sounds fascinating, Alaya.

Oswy: Marya I only think it becomes complex when we put our scientific reductionist hard line physics blinkers on. Otherwise its perfectly clear what qualia are and what consciousness is.

Alaya: it's something to discover Deo

Shingles: Who can say what the philosopher does? Depends what species of philosopher ... or race rather

Steve: well put Oswy

Marya: Following on from that - do you think these processes that make up the consciousness (if you generally agree with the aforementioned idea), are much the same as take place in other life forms, or do you think something unique is going on (clearly ours would be more complex in the way that we understand it)?

Reflection: yes, Deo, I think it would require not assuming that there is a reality (I'm simply not prepared to dispense with that assumption quite yet:)))

Deoridhe: I remember feeling that way about losing half my sense of taste, Alaya. I kind of wish I could choose to do it again, but the neuron started healing so I got my sense of taste back. XD

Marya: I don't know that I agree with that Oswy - I think if we can focus on the processes of what is happening, that we can better understand what it is

Steve: Our experience Marya, is of the world

Shingles: science isn't always reductive, it's dragged forward by hypothesis, you know

Deoridhe: Actually, Reflection, I was removing qualities of uniformity from reality, not claiming there isn't one, but there is a way in which the uniformity of reality is presumed to be all of it which is interesting.

Issakar: Wouldn't be able to know, Marya. Imagining something isn't identical with experiencing it.

Vajra: fascinating descriptions, Deo and Alaya.... thank you

Oswy: I think in humans there is something very complex going on. Dolphins and chimps are just a bit less complex Spiders have a world but it's simple. A virus has a very simple lifestyle I sometimes envy it.

Steve: the world is meaningful

Dar: since I don't know what consciousness is, it may be possible that electrons are conscious, though they would clearly lack the cognitive complexity for memory or reflection.

Marya: Yes Oswy - this is what I have been aiming at

Steve: only humans understand it as we humans do, imho

Shingles: I don't envy the virus, I attempt to kill it

Deoridhe: Envy and homicide are not mutually exclusive.

Oswy: Mind you a spider can spin a web and I can't do that.

Shingles: lmao

Reflection: Marya, it may be that the level of complexity involved in the human process makes it functionally quite unique, even though it is a clear progression on a well-worn theme

Shingles: Spiderman can

Marya: Aye Ref - that does make sense

Steve: or a jump Reflection; paradigm shift; shift happens

Deoridhe: snickers at Steve.

Oswy: Shingles wouldn't it be nice one morning just to wake up and all you had to do was penetrate a cell or two and reproduce. Ah the simple life.

Marya: The world is meaningful Steve? Can you explain what you mean by that?

Issakar: Sounds like someone I know Oswy. Quite a few, actually

Steve: everything in it has a name

Shingles: no, I revel in my complexity as an organism

Oswy: The world is meaningful because it fits in the space of reasons.

Steve: that is how we can't re-cognize things

Issakar: Let's start with cognizing first.

Shingles: v nice, Issakar

