

Research Essay

Inherent Subjectivity in Consciousness: A Functional Role of Acquaintance in Phenomenal Subjectivity (Part I)

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Abstract

"Phenomenal subjectivity" may arguably be describable as a mental state of "having" experience, taking as premise that such "having" of experience cannot occur without any *experiencing* state. Few theorists presently believe that a purely phenomenal kind of subjectivity can be known by acquaintance. I will test as "straw man", nonetheless, a working hypothesis stating that beliefs in acquainted knowledge of such phenomenal subjectivity is possible, through acquaintance with a correspondingly subjective element within the human psyche. The working hypothesis also implies that the concept CONSCIOUSNESS is possessed variously depending on whether phenomenal subjectivity as felt to be experienced by acquaintance is "well known" to the individual. Further still, it implies that the concept I in many cases may be possessed so as to refer to phenomenal subjectivity, such as the referent phenomenon of the latter term is felt to be consciously known following acquaintance with it.

Part I of this two-part article includes: 1. Introduction; 2. Background Theory of Self and Consciousness; and 3. Auto-Experience of Consciousness.

Key Words: Subjectivity, consciousness, functional role, acquaintance, phenomenology.

1. Introduction

I will use the terms "consciousness" and "phenomenal consciousness" interchangeably, believing Jesse Prinz has established them to be the most sensibly interpreted as synonymous (Prinz, p. 5-7). The concept CONSCIOUSNESS, further, I understand as describable by the notions "conscious access" (Dehaene, p. 20-1) and "acquaintance" (Tye, p. 139), here interpreted as synonyms terms.

The concept QUALIA, as among others Antonio Damasio uses it (Damasio, 2010, p. 256-62), refers to *conscious* experience of discrete qualities to experience. David Rosenthal has argued that qualia may be unconscious (Prinz, p. 144). Because of ambiguity even in light of the AIR-theory (Prinz, p. 126-33), I will specify "phenomenal qualia" when meaning consciously discernible characteristics.

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I believe that the concept I is sensibly understood so as to mean a "subject represented to itself". Whether that subject is essentially phenomenal of nature and, if so, whether it is knowable by acquaintance, are questions not answered by that formulation. Those questions will be important topics of this essay. My working hypothesis holds that both questions can be answered with a conditional "yes".

As noted in the abstract, I assume a difference between consciousness "to experience" and consciousness as reflecting the existence of subjectivity, by Prinz called "the phenomenal I" (Prinz, p. 213-4). I call the former "objective consciousness" and the latter "phenomenal subjectivity". I see these as two faces of one coin, namely consciousness.

Saying "blue is kept in consciousness" may thus mean "blue is kept among the experiences which in sum make up consciousness" (objective consciousness). Alternatively, it may mean "blue is kept among those experiences which consciousness as the conscious subject beholds" (phenomenal subjectivity).

I read the concept CONSCIOUSNESS so as *not* to differentiate the above two meanings. The implicit "duality in oneness" may nonetheless be realizable without experience of subjectivity by acquaintance, but through a posteriori inference. By every "accessed" experience, there's arguably a subjectivity to that experience (Strawson, in Freeman, p. 191).

Subjectivity, if not experienced a priori, may be deduced from the awareness of objectively conscious experiences combined with the inferred necessity of an instance for which experiences are being "held". The idea that phenomenal subjectivity may also be experienced a priori by acquaintance, as brute fact, is what counts as controversial (Prinz, p. 214).

I read Michael Tye so as to express the same reserve (Tye, p. 145). The existence of such experience, nonetheless, is what I put up as straw man and term "auto-experience". I hereby purport that auto-experience is often felt as an "attribute" to objectively conscious experiences. This "attribute", however, can either be strongly present or weakened/absent.

As to this essay's build-up, the relatively voluminous part two of this essay presents a review of recent views upon consciousness, the self and their interrelation. That will clarify what background knowledge I take as mine. I see such clarification as important, providing a sound theoretical foundation for the following, more hypothetical portions of the essay.

In part three, I present arguments concerning what the notion of "auto-experience" should sensibly be taken to mean. In part four, I present the idea that one way to "possess" (Tye, p. 41) the concept I, which more generally implies the presence of "self-consciousness", is expressed by a belief that it refers to phenomenal subjectivity as experienced by acquaintance.

2. Background Theory of Self and Consciousness

The coherence and complimentary nature of recent perspectives on consciousness

Single qualia are expressed by "vectorwaves" (Prinz, p. 128-31) occurring in populations of neurons. Consciousness, however, may ensue first as vectorwaves are modulated by attention (Prinz, p. 140-3), believed synonymous with certain neuronal activity in the gamma frequency (Prinz, p. 137) and increasing abruptly by conscious states (Dehaene, p. 130-40). The neuronal correlates of the consequent, phenomenal qualia are "gamma vectorwaves" (Prinz, p. 141 & 279).

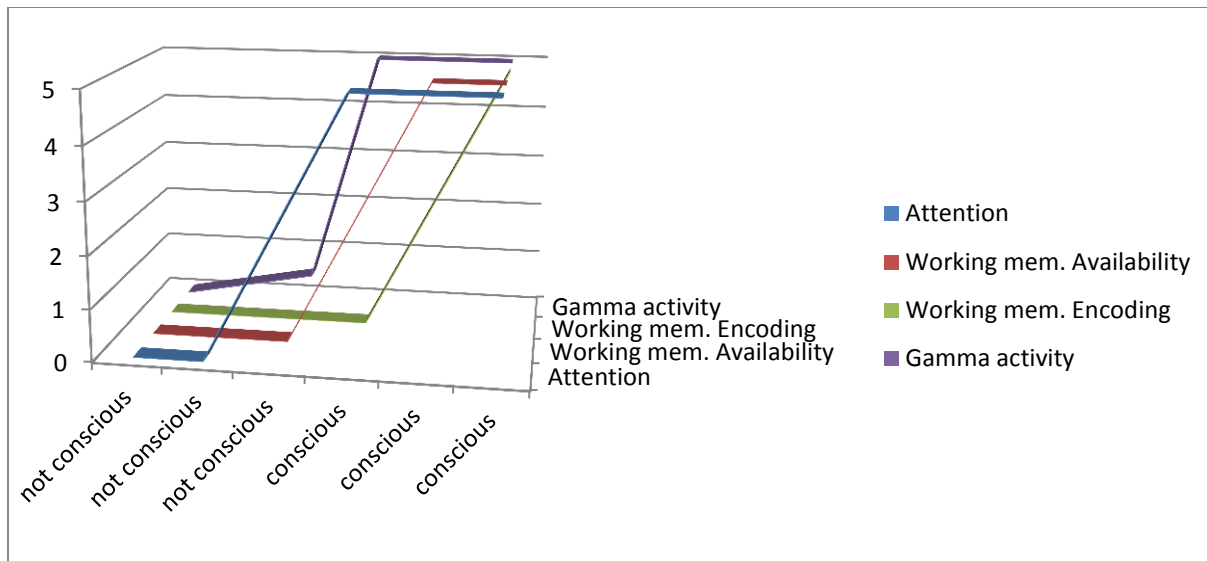
Stanislas Dehaene (p. 21-2) sees attention as separable from consciousness. The notion of "*attention as the process by which perceptual information becomes available to working memory*" (Prinz, p. 95), however, demonstrates how also Prinz thinks attention merely "gives rise to" consciousness (Prinz, p. 90). He holds "*availability to working memory*" to be definatory for consciousness (Prinz, p. 106), whereas encoding not.

The term "gamma synchrony" refers to synchrony of neuronal firing frequencies within neuronal populations (Prinz, p. 136). The "amplification effect" of non-random synchrony (Prinz, p. 252) is a pre-requirement for attention and thus consciousness. Resonance is synchronization across discrete experiential phenomena and sensory modalities (Prinz, p. 254), giving *unity* of consciousness (Prinz, p. 243-71).

Gamma frequencies must not exclusively *be* consciousness or even attention, since gamma only sometimes allow information to "*operate under the control of the brain mechanism that determine which bits of sensory information can gain access to working memory*" (Prinz, p. 143). A relationally correct depiction of reality, yet wherein the scale is unspecified and specification of values above zero thus practically irrelevant, could resemble the following:

Attention-controlling brain structures extensively connect to so called "intermediate level areas of perception" (Prinz, p. 143), yielding "attended, intermediate-level representations" or "AIRs". Prinz sees attention as necessary and sufficient for making intermediate level representations, *exclusively*, conscious (Prinz, p. 89).

Prinz' notion of AIRs displays similarities with Dehaene's notion of "samples" (Dehaene, p. 92-100). AIRs represent us to the information we need for adaptive purposes, namely perspectival and coherent perceptions of the world. A sample is a "*summary of the best current interpretation of the world*" (Dehaene, p. 92). Both give us versions of reality transcending ambiguities of initial, subconscious processing.



AIRs must be "viewpoint-specific" and "available" in order to inform action (Prinz , p. 200-4). "Samples", next, "*cut through ambiguities*" hence underlying our ability of "*decision-making*" (Dehaene, p. 92-3). Theorizing a close "real world connection" between the two theoretical conceptions is sensible.

Also at further levels, Prinz' and Dehaene's perspectives seem complimentary. Prinz' thinks attention, which modulation of AIRs is necessary and sufficient to make conscious, is a "gatekeeper" to working memory (Prinz, p. 92). Dahaene observes that "*working memory and consciousness seem to be tightly related*" as, if arguing with Daniel Dennett, "*a main role of consciousness may be to create lasting thoughts*" (Dehaene, p. 100).

The "Damasian" self

Antonio Damasio sees "primordial feelings" as body-referent, originating in evolutionary archaic, body-representing neuronal structures (Damasio, 2010, p. 21-2). A known concept-pair is interoception vs. exteroception (Prinz, p. 51). Interoception connotes parameters internal to the body, like sense of temperature, etc. (Damasio, 2010, p. 190-5).

A subset of interoceptive signals is what generates primordial feelings (Damasio, 2010, p 191). Exteroception essentially connotes parameters external to the body, beheld by means of the externally directed senses. (Damasio, 2010, p. 51). While exteroception is *not* self-related, interoception is the essential component of the "proto-self" (Damasio, 2010, p. 190), Damasio believes.

Damasio describes two types of so called "first order maps", of external reality and of the organism (Damasio, 1999, p. 169-70). The latter appears held by Damasio to be synonymous with the "proto-self" (Damasio, 2010, p. 190). Interoception, however, is too limited to define that proto-self. The proto-self also maps body-facts, such as information about the body and its parts as spatio-temporal structures (Damasio, 2010, p. 190-201). Interoceptive maps are nonetheless what Damasio believes *most essentially* constitutes the proto-self (Damasio, 2010, p. 195).

The same bodily substrate gives rise to different maps in the brain (Damasio, 1994, p. 232-3). The somato-sensory texture of the eye's retina elicits pain if over-stimulated. Simultaneously, also the visual image displayed on the retina "land" in that very same substrate. So called second order maps "record" interaction between first order maps of external objects and first order maps of the body (Prinz, p. 41).

This "recording" of second order maps is the constituent process of the so called "core self" (Damasio, 2010, p. 22-3). Within this process, interoceptive and other body-related information as represented in first order maps of the body-self (the proto-self) interact with exteroceptive information as represented in first order maps of the external world.

Beyond structure, homeostatic regulatory mechanisms yield "biological values" (Damasio, 2010, p. 46-9) which dictate the affective-emotional significance of stimuli (Damasio, 2010, p. 111-14). Biological values may attach to external stimuli within second order maps, yielding "emotionally competent stimuli" or "ECS" (Damasio, 2003, p. 53).

Viewed globally, such "somatic marking" yields a complex, unified organization of functions governing attention and indirectly behaviour (Damasio, 1994, p. 196-8). This, one might even say, is a *function* of the proto-self, the foundation of the self as a whole, as expressed through body-representing states (Damasio, 2010, p. 20-6).

Consciousness' point of entry

Damasio thinks qualia stem from the body as extensions of body cells (Damasio, 2010, p. 256-7), yet believes consciousness arises first in second order maps (Prinz, p. 41) at the core self level (Damasio, 1999, p. 174). If Damasio means *phenomenal* qualia, this seems like a contradiction by terms. Prinz, for one, thinks phenomenal qualia can be conscious at the level of first-order maps (Prinz, p. 42-3).

Following Prinz' argumentation, if body feelings were conscious first at the level of second order maps, *conscious* body feelings would be impossible unless the external source of the body

feelings is represented in second order maps. When squeezing an arm in a door, however, representation of the door is not needed to sense the conscious pain.

In the exteroceptive domain, intermediate-level representations (Prinz, p 54) appear to exist, consciously attended as AIRs, prior to the core self. Otherwise, we wouldn't perceive the visual impression of a building or of motion (or perceive music) unless the self is represented as experiencing it. By states of dissociative "absorption", this appears not to be the case (Howell, p. 19-20).

A question is whether the existence of purely *body*-related AIRs at the proto-self level is feasible. Only such AIRs would let conscious *bodily* states prior to the core self be viewable as coherent with the AIR-theory. Having developed his views before the AIR-theory came onto the market, Damasio originally did not have the chance to take stance to that critical question.

Arguably, sensations appear to be perspectival, a requirement for AIRs (Prinz, p. 200-4), if one knows where in the body a feeling occurs, like by normal, conscious pain. A core self does not seem necessary for that, only that each constituent body part is represented as it stands in relation to the body as whole.

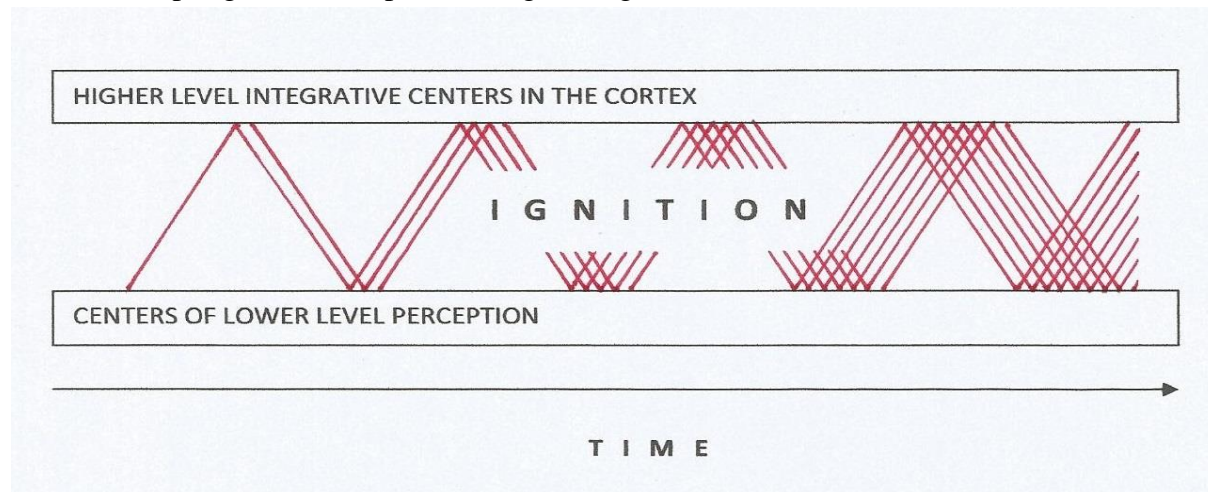
There are functio-structural characteristics appearing to grant the fulfilment of this requirement. These are those above described as non-interoceptive parts of the proto-self, specifically the "master organism map" and "maps of externally directed sensory portals" (Damasio, 2010, p. 190-201). Potentially, such maps allow "intermediate level representation" (Prinz, p. 50-7), at "pre-core-self" levels and hence also consciousness to "enter" here.

The neuronal correlates of consciousness

As to the topic of the neuronal correlates of consciousness (Chalmers, 2010, p. 91-100), gamma frequencies are present also by sub-conscious processing, yet show a massive increase by conscious processing (Dehaene, p. 135-6). Dehaene sees such "global ignition" (Dehaene, p. 121-34) as instrumental for consciousness (Dehaene, p. 140).

Consciousness coincides with activation of various brain sites through global ignition, forming a "distributed brain web", within which only "*long-distance loops, bringing in prefrontal and parietal regions, would create a conscious code*" (Dehaene, p 156). Within such a "conscious code", bidirectional causality (Dehaene, p. 139-40) cause refinement of perception through sustained mutual, bi-directional exchange" (Dehaene, p. 96).

An over-simplifying, but for illustrative purposes sufficing model depicting a relationship between sampling (Dehaene, p. 92) and global ignition could look as follows:



Within the model, even an initial, bottom up sample must be understood as "intermediate level". Subsequently to this, intermediate level perception appears expressible through the process of ignition as such. The main question in the following, then, is what the neuronal correlates of consciousness (NCC) *is*, within the above model.

If the NCC is the ignition process as a whole, from the first sampling onwards, subliminal perception (Dehaene, p. 52-88) is not explainable, since ambiguous, merely probabilistic information is all that exists prior to sampling (Dehaene, p. 92-3).

The NCC could alternatively appear at a threshold *within* the process of global ignition (one sufficient for granting access to working memory). Subliminal perception would then require degrees of ignition, an idea similarly at odds with knowledge (Dehaene, p. 119).

If the NCC would be "upwards" sampling (Dehaene, p. 139) responsible for presenting unambiguous percepts, possibly also taking place by means of gamma activity, subliminal perception would apparently have to be conscious. This is a contradiction by terms.

The NCC, however, could possibly be further gamma modulation causing top-down responses to present samples (Dehaene, p. 139-40), thereby triggering or sustaining ignition. This differs from top down, a-consciously defined attention ("scanning" for samples), which may occur *without* global ignition and in the absence of bottom up sampling (Dehaene, p. 140).

One may believe such top-down responses to "*check that the input is consistent with the current interpretation at a higher level*" (Dehaene, p. 140). If the NCC is thus constituted by top down responses releasing or sustaining ignition as reaction to samples, subliminal perception is understandable as occurrences of sampling bottom up *not* releasing ignition.

How, however, can we then explain that binocular rivalry (where sampling is present) vanishes by anesthesia (Dehaene, p. 96-8)? Dehaene sees this as a problem, believing global ignition is necessary for sampling, since he claims consciousness is necessary for sampling (Dehaene, p. 98). Based on Dehaene himself (p. 92-100), however, seeing consciousness as necessary for sampling rather than conversely seems unwarranted.

The awareness of conscious percepts described by binocular rivalry (Dehaene, p. 98) should require ignition, since per definition conscious. Attention as a-consciously defined, could be all which is required for sampling. Moreover, that could be what is dysfunctional by anesthesia. Consciousness could potentially then follow exclusively *after* some initial sampling, as samples get "selected" for global ignition and thus for conscious access.

To clear further inconsistencies between the present suggestion and the AIR-theory, we must look at the meaning of "AIRs". Are they bottom up "samples"? Gamma could be involved in sampling. Attention may be non-conscious. Prinz, however, sees attention of intermediate level representations as *sufficient* for consciousness and hence per definition conscious (Prinz, p. 86).

The consciousness-requirement being the leading for AIRs, one could alternatively ask if AIRs exclusively are top-down gamma modulation of present samples? That would allow bottom up samples, describable as *unconsciously* attended intermediate representations, but without being AIRs.

The above description chiefly corresponds to the NCC as according to the AIR theory (Prinz, p. 123-45). For coherence with Dehaene's view, however, AIRs must be more narrowly defined, since subconscious attention *may* modulate qualia as vector waves. This is something not mentioned by Prinz as he introduces the concept AIR (Prinz, p. 89-99).

Having reached this far, one may also go another step further: Attention, a-consciously defined, can occur without global ignition (Dehaene, p. 74-6). Can it, however, do so even *following* bottom up sampling? A "yes" makes the present description the most coherent and would also support Dehaene's view that global ignition simply *is* the NCC. There could be unconscious, bidirectional, bottom-top exchanges without global ignition and thus without consciousness.

This reality description removes the above mentioned hurdle to accepting global ignition as the NCC; that subliminal perception would seem unexplainable due to the exclusive existence of ambiguous, probabilistic perception prior to sampling. This no longer remains a naturally given consequence, given that bidirectional exchanges (implying a "sampling process"), including top down activity, actually take place without ignition. Conversely, even bottom up activity, if part

of global ignition, could thus be part of the NCC, since being part of ignition makes it more than "mere" sampling.

In light of the above, what we would need for Dehaene and Prinz' to cohere is simple. We must refine the definition of AIRs as "intermediate level representations part of *ignition*". This, as alternative to Prinz' definition: "Intermediate level representations modulated by attention".

In the introduction, it was left open whether qualia are separable from their phenomenal experience. The above discussions allows sampled qualia to be definable as non-AIR. They may reflect bottom-up / top-down activity *not* releasing global ignition, whereas such ignition is necessary for consciousness.

If thus defined, qualia may apparently exist without consciousness, although the converse does not naturally follow. True, Prinz thinks consciousness is necessary for qualia, but he explicitly *defines* qualia as such (Prinz, p. 332-3). It is not given that his definition is universally accepted.

Separability of self and consciousness

To the extent that consciousness and self are separable, also the notion of auto-experience (to be discussed in the next heading) will be irreducible to any process relying on the self or "self-consciousness", as in "self as consciousness turning conscious of self as consciousness". The latter formulation is one derivable from an assumption like Damasio's, that self and consciousness are essentially ontologically inseparable (2010, p. 256-9).

Damasio's perspective allows the existence of non-conscious self-functions, including ones causing attentional and behavioural modulation. One known example is subconscious somatic marking (Damasio, 1994, p. 184-5). This takes place at the core self level, since exteroceptive perception may activate biological values through ECSs, using an "as-if-loop" (Damasio, 1999, p. 279-84).

Conversely, by dissociative, deeply absorbed, hypnotic or sleeping dream states, a "normal" subsumption of such conscious experience under the umbrella of a self-conscious "I" arguably lacks, which perspectivity I will later argue is defined by and through the self. This is not enough to finally conclude, however.

By meditation, the practice of "bare attention" (Thera, p. 30-45) is a method to attain a mode of conscious attention functioning autonomously of intrinsic dispositions (Epstein, p. 113). That is, autonomously of the self's attention-regulating functions. It is a goal to reach a state of "I-less" (aka *not* self-conscious), yet highly conscious experience (Epstein. p. 84).

This describes a flow of conscious subjectivity without self, apparently supporting the notion that self and consciousness are separable. However, since biological values constitutes that which decide action tendencies, the self should be the source of volition used in pursuit and training of such a mode of consciousness. That the self should aid something *not* part of itself seems contra-intuitive, however.

The apparent self-contradiction wanes, nonetheless, if the self benefits consciousness in some manner. This is indeed plausible, in the sense that consciousness grants increased capacities of adaption. Granted the two must thus not be "part and parcel" of another, separability of self and consciousness is conceivable, in contradiction of Damasio. Phenomenal subjectivity and auto-experience must have nothing to do with the Damasian self.

3. Auto-Experience of Consciousness

The notion of a phenomenal subject

The concept SUBJECT (and derivate SUBJECTIVITY) should be clarified as to the presently intended, phenomenal meaning. It is not here meant to describe any "perspectivity" (Graumann, in Graumann & Kallmeyer, p. 25-40), as definable for "selves" from intermediate levels (Prinz, p. 203) of the proto-self (Damasio, 2010, p. 190) onwards. In a minimalist sense, phenomenal subjectivity is definable simply as a mental state of "having" conscious experience.

Such "having" of experience can be indicated as a "*what-it-is-likeness for someone-or-something*" (Strawson, in Freeman, p.189). True, there is a perspectival aspect to all single cases of having experience, but this is arguably not the defining element of phenomenal subjectivity. The "someone or something" is merely the ontological counterpart of "having" in a "thin" (Strawson, in Freeman, p. 191-3) sense, meaning specifiable or enduring perspectivity, such as that of a self, is not the essential thing about it.

Galen Strawson describes the essence of subjectivity as understood in the thin sense: "*if there could, say, be pain-experience - massive, appalling, avoidable, wholly useless pain - without any subject of experience, there would be no point in stopping it, because no one, no someone-or-something would be suffering*" (Strawson, in Freeman, p. 191).

Prinz questions the notion that "*there is no experience without an experiencer*" (Prinz, p. 220). When "*losing ourselves*", he writes, "*we don't stop thinking*" (Prinz, p. 221). By "absorption" (Howell, p. 19), as I read that, we don't stop having experiences, including those of thoughts. This, however, allows the existence of a *not* self-conscious phenomenal subject.

Prinz argues further that the "I's" existence has no *acquainted* referents, no "I-qualia". Only qualities of perception, sensation and emotion are constituents of experience, he writes (Prinz, p. 214). Still, he does not hereby touch upon the topic of whether phenomenal subjectivity exists, only upon an epistemological concern (Prinz, p. 213-14). Phenomenal subjectivity remains potentially realizable, yet by inference, not by acquaintance (Prinz, p. 215).

Auto-experience

I elsewhere expressed a belief that consciousness may experience "itself" (as subject) by acquaintance (Halvorsen, p. 136-7). *That* idea is what Prinz essentially disputes (Prinz, p. 2013-4). *If* direct acquaintance with phenomenal subjectivity occurs, nonetheless, it should arguably take place "pre self".

Terms like "itself", "own experience", "self-experience" and even "I" should thus be avoided when dealing with auto-experience. Naturally, they are all conceptual *representations* of "something" either fully or partially deriving identity from the self. Arguably, thus, Prinz causes a degree of conceptual unclarity, talking about a "phenomenal I" (Prinz, p. 213) rather than something like here; a "phenomenal subject".

By general consideration, auto-experience should never *refer* to consciousness as a conceptually *represented* phenomenon. To the degree that auto-experience would require representation, the subject-side of consciousness could arguably not be conveyed. Any subject represented naturally turns into a representational *object*.

Clearly, there is no such thing as a "representational subject". If subjectivity gets represented, auto-experience as inner display of an ontologically given subjectivity will arguably be replaced by an epistemological problem of how to know whether the given representation "really" has phenomenal subjectivity as referent. One might feel the represented phenomenon to have it, but doubt may be elicited.

Maybe auto-experience *is* describable, but merely by approximation, assuming the same degree of non-reducibility to descriptions of its phenomenal experience as may pertain to "consciousness" generally (Tye, p. 1). I'll here hold auto-experience to be *describable* as a consciously experienced "*feeling of existence*". The term "existence" might be possessed so as to indicate "having experience" while the term "feeling" might be possessed so as to indicate acquaintance.

The notion "feeling", nonetheless, cannot be separated from that of "existence". Phenomenal subjectivity as aspect of consciousness is not a "self" or otherwise something which, in addition

to existing, "has" experience. Experience *is* its essential and sole nature and thus directly underpins its status as existent. As to auto-experience as the experience by acquaintance *of* this, however, further specification is needed.

Auto-experience, off course, must *pr. definition* be a conscious experience. That is, phenomenal subjectivity is *available to* working memory as a "brute quality" (Chalmers, 1996, p. 291) through auto-experience, thus *potentially* denotable as a "demonstrative concept" (Sainsbury & Tye, p. 13-14), such as THAT, when awareness occurs.

The originating use of a demonstrative concept may later come to be possessed so as to be the referent of some shared concept (Sainsbury & Tye, 40-4). We may thus assume the existence of concepts which are believed to refer to auto-experience, either fully or partially. I believe the concepts I and CONSCIOUSNESS to be the central such concepts.

Seeking understanding of auto-experience

I elsewhere used the experience of light as analogy for what I call auto-experience (Halvorsen, p. 136). I suggested that "focus" upon the sum total of all "brightness" as an independently existing, global phenomenon could be an apt symbol for such experience. Such a focus, then, as opposed to a focus upon light merely in and through what it *represents* as "medium", namely discrete objects.

A complication to that is that consciously aware perception of light as "overarching" phenomenon may take place. All light, as a universal "gestalt" or "object", may be perceptively abstracted and represented as the *concept* LIGHT. Auto-experience should refer to something also existing independently of any conceptualization.

Conscious, perceptual experience without conscious, conceptual representation should be possible. What may turn conscious are *products* of subconscious perception (Dehaene, p. 92). Further, consciousness is defined as availability to, not as encoding in, working memory (Prinz, p. 106).

We act upon perceptions we are not aware of, like during "highway-hypnosis" (Howell, p. 20). Conscious or unconscious, events and objects then remain just *available* to working memory (Prinz, p. 99-102). This also sounds like what may take place during states of trance, hypnosis (Howell, p. 32-3) and arguably dreaming sleep.

The state may also be described as consciousness without a self-conscious "I". Dieter Vaitl describes "absorption" according to similar terms (Vaitl. p. 206-9). Auto-experience, in its

defining essence, should similarly occur as a conscious but not aware state. The sum-of-light-analogy could here still find a conditional use.

It is just as fruitful, nevertheless, to ask what takes place *additionally* to (or "behind") conceptual thought as to ask what is there in its absence. The "strength" of objectively conscious qualia, like the *chromatic intensity* or *colour saturation* (Finkeldei, online) could hypothetically be a factor *correlating* with auto-experience, albeit not likely as sole, decisive variable.

A perspective like here indicated could also cohere with Zen-philosophy. Eckhart Tolle indicates that meditation leads to the ceasing of the psyche's compulsive orientation of attention around "thought" (Tolle, p. 14-17). This is even described (Tolle, p. 96-8) to yield a feeling of "presence", apparently close to that of "existence", indicative of auto-experience.

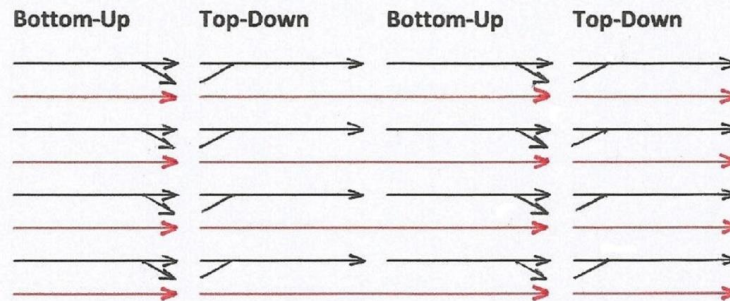
Neuronal correlates of auto-experience

The model which follows is hypothetical. It has as goal to aim at *possibility* of a neuro-functional correlate to auto-experience. Neuronal interconnections are shown, each arrow representing a single neuronal cell. The gaps between these are directly analogical to those of neuronal synapses (Klinke & Silbernagl, p. 60-77). I tentatively call the model the "*top-top model of auto-experience*".

In a potential, neuro-functional reality corresponding to the model, within the so called "red" activity, contents of consciousness get changed only at the "top point". The changes may thus not be felt as founded in the body or senses, but as a "given" within a circular and hence autonomous process. The conscious contents of the circular ("red") activity could be felt as "dissociated" from the natural, bodily-sensual base of experiential contents.

Within the so called "black" activity, taken alone, the subjectivity inherent to all conscious experience is "too close" to the objective content to be *felt* as separable from it. That notion directly reflects Prinz' notion that what he termed "I-qualia" are impossible (Prinz, p. 214). Phenomenal subjectivity is there if inherent to consciousness, but no knowledge of this by acquaintance. The only thing known by acquaintance are objective contents of consciousness. Clearly, there is a situation analogical to that description also concerning the "red" activity, seen isolated.

CUTOUT OF NEURONAL ACTIVITY AS PART OF "GLOBAL IGNITION":



BLACK ACTIVITY: Some definable content of consciousness, such as a visual object, a sound, a physical pain or an emotion

RED ACTIVITY: The same content, but in a circular top - top mode

Both "black" and "red" activity being conscious, however, one will be acquainted with experiential phenomena through the "black" activity and *additionally* with an, as if "superimposed" replication of those phenomena within the "red" activity. The "red" activity is not just a medium for experiential contents, for which the "black" activity would suffice. The "red" activity could thus be felt as "something extra"; as an epiphenomenal "presence". The "sum-of-light-analogy" may find its conditional use right here, as meaning "the-sum-of-red-activity".

Some could argue against the latter notion, that "red" activity as such can't be conscious, only the *contents* of "red" activity as consciously experienced. In order to counter that argument, neuro-functionally, there must be a two way street between "red" activity and some other, also conscious state ("black" activity). That, furthermore, is provided by the above model, granted that "black" activity as part of ignition is also "conscious".

Relative to "black" activity, "red" activity may be recognized as "other". This may occur due to a minimal discrepancy of contents, as following due to the delay of bottom up input to the "red" activity. Summarizing, "red" activity could be felt as an instance of conscious experience being "present" or "existing" and in its own right also "having" the experiences inherent initially to the "black" activity.

Contours of a hypothesis of auto-experience

According to the presented model, experiencing "red" activity by acquaintance would be synonymous with feeling as if experiencing the phenomenal subject. I write feeling "as if" because one may still argue that the phenomenal subjectivity as inherent in *all* conscious experience, "black" and "red" activity alike, may not be experienced by acquaintance.

That is, one may argue that one merely experiences an "intra-psychic object" having experiences of its own, although that "having" implies subjectivity. This issue pertains to the so called "hard problem" (Chalmers, 2010, p. 3-6), and may here be unnecessarily over-complicating. What I purport to explain, essentially, is a mechanism allowing *phenomenal judgments* that phenomenal subjectivity is acquainted, as being based on actual acquaintance with a corresponding "function of phenomenal subjectivity".

Summarizing the more pragmatic implications of the present perspective, by objective consciousness I believe that one notes consciousness as something "similar across experiences", thus experienced to be a unitary phenomenon; "consciousness". I believe, furthermore, that the concept CONSCIOUSNESS will be differently possessed (Tye, p. 41), if auto-experience is involved.

One idea is that phenomenal subjectivity acquainted through auto-experience reflects one half of a *full* possession of the concept CONSCIOUSNESS. Possessing the concept merely as objective consciousness reflects a partial possession. If the concept CONSCIOUSNESS is possessed fully, one should "grasp" its subjective nature by acquaintance as a "brute fact".

If merely objective consciousness is felt a priori, realizing that "consciousness" may refer to conscious subjectivity should only occur a posteriori. Insight into the essential object-subject duality of conscious experience then has to be based on inference of the logical necessity of a "subjective element" to "having" experience, as linked to that objectively conscious experience.

(Continued on Part II)