

## ***Against egalitarianism\****

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Let us begin with a parable:

For as long as you can remember, you have known the world *as a whole*: as your interest moves you, you scale up various bits to study them more closely, but you do not find yourself embedded within any particular bit. A vast physical expanse dotted around with tiny pockets of life is spread out before you. Within these pockets of life are tinier dots of consciousness: nonphysical subjects of experience painted with nonphysical phenomenal features are bound to certain creatures. These subjects of experience stand out to you as a constellation of points of phenomenal light, and you can snoop on their inner lives by knowing the phenomenal colors of those lights. You are of the opinion that you are one of those points of light, but you have never cared to find out which one you are.

At some point this surfing through the silence and darkness, sometimes peering in on the interiority of others, begins to feel lonesome: the pain of your disengagement and alienation mounts inexorably. *Who am I—and what is it like to be down in there, as me???* The question is deafening.

Finally you remember the magic words you learned so long ago: repeat three times ‘there’s no place like home’ and you will return to your embedded perspective within the world. You intone the spell in inner speech, and . . .

BOOM! The lights, the noise, the grit, the pulse of bodies and shine of hard metal; the smells of flint, petrol, burned pretzels, your own sweat; the cold air burning your lungs, the elation of your drive to

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\*Review of Chalmers 2010, forthcoming in an *Analysis Reviews* symposium. Bare citations and references to ‘this volume’ concern this collection of Chalmers’s papers on consciousness.

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move forward, the moment-to-moment flickers of decision keeping you balanced and slicing through the traffic—it's Times Square, you're running a red light on your stripped down bike, carrying a package down Seventh Avenue on a Saturday night in late December 1983—

Before or After—the constellation or the embedded point of view—which of these is illusion, which reality?

It seems clear to me that what consciousness is is what you find After: so if the embedded perspective isn't real, consciousness isn't real. But the picture laid out in this volume is, I fear, more in line with the opposing answer. I trace this odd commitment to an *egalitarian* stance concerning the ontological status of personal perspectives—roughly, fundamental reality treats mine and yours as on a par. While egalitarianism is superficially quite plausible, the systematic theory of consciousness unfolding from it is besieged by objections from top to bottom. So if we judge egalitarianism by its fruits, it turns out to be extraordinarily *implausible*.

Section 1 summarizes the doctrines in this volume concerning the metaphysics and epistemology of consciousness, making explicit how these doctrines flow from egalitarianism. Section 2 brings objections against each of these central doctrines. Section 3 sketches the inegalitarian alternative.

## 1 Egalitarianism in Chalmers's system

The following doctrines are central to the metaphysics and epistemology of consciousness as developed in this volume:<sup>1</sup>

1. Objective fundamental reality contains many *subjects of experience*, one for each separate stream of consciousness (253);

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<sup>1</sup>Italicized jargon to be clarified below.

Each of these theses is, in the volume, hedged around with multiple qualifications and alternative formulations. So the full-strength theses I present here should not be understood as presenting an exact picture of the views of Chalmers himself. In the interest of getting to the point, I suppress these qualifications: I believe that this decision will not make any of my complaints completely miss the views of the man himself, though in certain cases, various subtle reformulations may be required.

2. Subjects of experience are objectively distinguished over time and from one another in how their streams of consciousness are by *phenomenal properties*: in effect, ways it can be like to be a subject (163, 252);
3. A subject's self-knowledge of consciousness is in the form of *de se self-ascription* of phenomenal properties (so that the contents of such self-knowledge can be represented by properties of subject-stages, or by sets of 'centered worlds') (296–7);
4. What is cognitively distinctive about the first-person perspective on the character of consciousness is grounded in facts about *phenomenal attention*:<sup>2</sup>
  - (a) The property-instances with which a subject is *acquainted* are exactly those phenomenal properties the subject instantiates (285, 287, 291);
  - (b) If one directs phenomenal attention on something, that thing is an object of one's acquaintance (285);
  - (c) The types to which the objects of one's phenomenal attention belong are the candidate vehicles-slash-referents of one's *Lagadonian* or 'quotational' concepts (256, 257, 267);
  - (d) Predicating the corresponding Lagadonian concept of the bearer of an object of phenomenal attention is *propositional knowledge* (286);
  - (e) Grasp of a Lagadonian concept of *P* suffices for *knowledge of the nature of P* (265);
  - (f) Phenomenal properties are *Edenic-representational*: the content of such a property falsely self-ascribes acquaintance with a primitive or 'Edenic' external world quality (not: quality-*instance*) (chapter 12);
5. One's justification for ascription of phenomenal properties to others comes from *inference to the best explanation* of physical evidence (58);

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<sup>2</sup>'Attention' of the sort that grounds Lagadonian concepts is the only sort that will be at issue in this review: a looser use of 'attend' meaning 'think about' is off the table.

6. The subjects of experience and phenomenal properties are *superadded ontological extras* independent of the physical (chapters 5–6).<sup>3</sup>

The *egalitarian* thinks that fundamental reality contains many separate streams of consciousness. Our theses (1)–(6) progress quite naturally from egalitarianism:

- i. If nothing is special about my stream of consciousness, we need to keep it separate from yours: the subjects of experience in (1) serve as an ontological basis of particular ‘pegs’ around each of which we might be able to aggregate a stream of consciousness separate from all others.
- ii. Once subjects are in the picture, we need to mark distinctions in how they are phenomenologically both *within* the same stream of consciousness, diachronically, and *between* streams of consciousness: it is *properties* that distinguish particulars and their stages—hence (2).
- iii. Wheeling in some further fact my knowledge of which is the basis of my distinctive referential capacity in regard to *my* stream of consciousness rather than *yours* would be hopeless: nothing is special about me, so that further fact would do nothing to distinguish you from me; accordingly, this referential capacity consists in something ‘extracognitive’, namely my identity as the one doing the referring—hence (3).
- iv. Since my stream of consciousness is part of the objective world, my distinctive perspective on the character of my stream of consciousness is a matter of my distinctive *conceptualization* of this character: (4) specifies what is distinctive about this conceptualization. In particular, clauses (d) and (e) explain the way in which this self-conceptualization is special; clauses (b) and (c) explain how it could be special in this way; and clauses (a) and (b) ensure that *your* phenomenal properties—or anything’s *nonphenomenal* properties—don’t slop over into my distinctive viewpoint on my stream of

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<sup>3</sup>Alternatively, on ‘Russellian monism’ (133), fundamental reality contains *only* consciousness. The issues in this review do not turn on this distinction.

consciousness. Part (f) is a rear-guard manoeuvre to block worries about the ‘transparency of experience’.

- v. If there are other streams of consciousness in the objective world, but (3) and (4) prevent me from adopting the first-person view on them, my knowledge of other minds is theoretical knowledge: that is (5).
- vi. The evident distinctions between the concepts addressed under (4) and our concepts of the physical give rise to failures of entailment of propositions about consciousness by propositions about the physical; ‘modal rationalism’ (184ff) gets us to failure of psychophysical supervenience.

## 2 Troubles for the egalitarian

I will now raise objections to theses (1)–(6) at the rate of one thesis per subsection.

### 2.1 A heavy truck driver

The ‘subjects of experience’ discussed in this volume are, I believe, non-physical ‘soul-pellets’ (cf. 139, fn. 26). Contrast Conscious Sam and Zombie Sam: a physical creature is present in both cases, but a subject of experience is present only in the former case. Is the subject of experience merely the physical creature *qua* conscious? No: consciousness is a fundamental property, and is therefore presumably kind-individuating, and therefore essential. Is the physical creature present in the Conscious Sam case merely the subject of experience *qua* embodied—so that that creature is absent in the Zombie Sam case? Not if physical properties are fundamental. So Conscious Sam is Zombie Sam plus a soul pellet driving her around—so the subject of experience is a soul pellet.

Worries about soul pellets are legion: the Humean worry that I notice none in my own conscious life, so that a phenomenologically adequate story would leave them out; causal interaction between pellets and the physical is mysterious; when I say ‘I weigh 165 pounds’ I am not engaging in ‘deferred reference’ to the

body driven around by this soul pellet after the manner of a heavy truck driver saying ‘I weigh 30,000 pounds’.<sup>4</sup> It would be nice to know how the egalitarian proposes to address these legitimate worries; the Humean worry, in particular, will be developed at length in what follows.

## 2.2 ‘We loved it, everyone was so nice!’

Phenomenal properties inherit worries from the soul-pellets that instantiate them—in subsections 2.3 and 2.4, we will develop the Humean ‘phenomenological adequacy’ worry at greater length. But further: what does ‘phenomenal property’ mean? Friends of this jargon (cf. 252) typically introduce it with something like the following speech (frequently further laced with either additional jargon like ‘experience’, the posit of a distinctive faculty of attention, or tendentious presuppositions about natural language expressions like ‘look’ or ‘appear’):

The phenomenal property of seeing a red thing is what it is like to see a red thing. That is to say, it is a property had by whatever ‘seeing a red thing’ generalizes over: it is what seeing a red thing is, in general, like—a way seeing a red thing, in general, is. Let me give an example. Think about when Black-and-White Mary first sees a red thing: she learns what seeing a red thing is like. Whatever the thing, in general, she learns about is, what she learns it is like is what phenomenal-red is.

This position presupposes that Mary learns that seeing a red thing is, in general, phenomenal-red. I find the grammar here very odd. Usually when we ask ‘what was that like’ we do not expect a predicate back in response, but rather a sentence. I am inclined to suspect that this means that knowledge of what a certain situation is like is knowledge of what—about any range of subjects—one who is in that situation learns about objective matters. So no special properties at all are the subject-matter of knowledge of what it’s like; so no special properties are involved

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<sup>4</sup>An example Mark Johnston gave in seminar in 1997.

in what it's like. Or more modestly, 'phenomenal property' is inexplicable without appeal to equally tendentious apparatus.

### 2.3 A vertiginous question

How do I pick out which soul pellet I am? This volume appeals to de se content in answering this question. An explicit argument for this choice is not apparent: perhaps because otherwise a certain vertiginous question can't be answered.

One of the many subjects of experience—soul pellets—is *me*. It is easy to pick it out uniquely by description: it 'drives around' the human being whose visage matches a photo on a driver's license bearing the name 'Benjamin Hellie'; it has the experience of writing these words on the 29th of January 2012. We will call this the 'Hellie-subject'. (The reader is asked to substitute examples concerning her or himself for examples I have phrased as concerning myself.)

Having settled this, a vertiginous question is right around the corner. The Hellie-subject: *why* is it me? Why is it the one whose pains are 'live', whose volitions are *mine*, about whom self-interested concern makes sense? That thing there in the objective world: *what is so special about it?* Why doesn't some other subject of experience there in the objective world 'go live' in this way: for instance, the 'Chalmers-subject' out there driving around in the human being whose visage matches a photo on a certain driver's license bearing the name 'David Chalmers'—why not instead *it*?

Granted that the Hellie-subject is acquainted with a certain class of phenomenal properties: if that subject is acquainted with right-arm pain, then I will feel right-arm pain—so the theory tells us. But of course the Chalmers-subject is also acquainted with a certain class of phenomenal properties: if that subject is acquainted with left-arm pain, then Chalmers will feel left-arm pain, and I might not. So facts about which subjects are acquainted with what cannot answer our question. Why should the acquaintance-relations of the Hellie-subject rather than those of the Chalmers-subject be the ones relevant to what *I* feel?

The egalitarian should be able to answer the vertiginous question, because it makes perfect sense to ask it given the egalitarian metaphysics. When I 'look

down into' objective reality, I find a great multitude of subjects of experience 'dotted around', each one painted with various phenomenal properties and linked to a certain creature by psychophysical laws: that is what the egalitarian metaphysics says the world is like, in toto. The 'god's eye' point of view taken in setting up the egalitarian metaphysics does not correspond to my 'embedded' point of view 'from here', staring out at a certain computer screen. The god's eye mode of presentation of the Hellie-subject and the embedded mode of presentation of myself are different: as different as the manifest and scientific modes of presentation of water—indeed, perhaps even more so: that is the core of the Humean worry. So it is not a priori that any of those subjects is exactly the same thing as me. And if not, if I am told that it is *this one* that is me, I want to know why that is.

The use made in this volume of de se content suggests an answer: the hypothesises that I am the Hellie-subject and that I am the Chalmers-subject self-ascribe (to the Hellie-subject) *being the Hellie-subject* and *being the Chalmers-subject*. These are both coherent properties: I have the former, Chalmers has the latter. But uncertainty which I have is not uncertainty between metaphysically possible situations. And the vertiginous question 'why am I the Hellie-subject' is rebuffed with the claim that there is no fact 'I am the Hellie-subject' to be explained: there is only the trivial fact of the Hellie-subject's self-identity. The rebuttal succeeds as a technical manoeuvre, of course. Still, we should not use de se content to model the first-person perspective.

The apparatus of de se content is not without attraction for modeling *temporal* perspective. The sense that there is something metaphysically distinctive about my perspective of the present moment can seem to disappear when I adopt the embedded perspective of my whole life. To attain this perspective, I imaginatively send my point of view back into the past and forward into the future. When doing so, my conscious life is revealed to be a long string of points of view, each of which treats itself as the 'crest of the wave of being': past points of view are but memories, future points of view are anticipated but not yet to be. Since each point of view feels this way about itself, my sense at each time that my then-present point of view is special is inescapable. So that sense is an artifact of a



certain essential feature of the subjective point of view, rather than a record of a legitimate metaphysical asymmetry.

In this way, we provide something like an error theory about the sense that there is a need for a metaphysical explanation of the distinctive character of one's present point of view. We appeal to properties of times rather than propositions as contents of temporally-perspectival thoughts because such properties have the right level of 'grain' to capture the 'parochialism' of such thoughts: from the perspective of my whole life, I find that temporally-perspectival thoughts do not purport to universality or objectivity, so there is no reason to assign to them contents that only register distinctions that show up from a universal, objective point of view. In this way, our formal system registers a limitation of scope in the phenomenon of which it is to provide the structure. Note that this does not involve taking up a 'constellation' perspective on my own life: I can remain embedded while keeping the entirety of my life in view.

Should we do the same for the first-person perspective? A parody argument would run like this:

The sense that there is something metaphysically distinctive about *my* perspective can seem to disappear upon the adoption of the embedded perspective of the totality of consciousness. To take this perspective up, I sympathetically push my point of view over to one person, then another, then another. When doing so, the totality of consciousness is revealed to be a chattering hive of strings of points of view, each treating itself as the 'center of the world': bound within itself by the chains of acquaintance, it finds only alterity and darkness—or at best sympathetic imagination—beyond the reach of these chains. Since each string of points of view feels this way about itself, one's sense that one's personal point of view is special is inescapable. So that sense is an artifact of a certain essential feature of the subjective point of view, rather than a record of a legitimate metaphysical asymmetry.

By contrast with the original argument, this parody argument is very strange. What is the source of this asymmetry?

The embedded perspective of my whole life is one I genuinely can attain. I persist: I have been around since the early 1970s, and will (I hope) be around for

several decades more. It is not the case that ‘me-now’ is created anew at each moment, with nothing but ‘external relations’ to the indefinitely many ‘me-then’s that have been. Rather, I am—my total stream of consciousness is—a genuine unity. Of course each stage of the stream of consciousness ‘disagrees’ with all others, in some sense, about when the present is. Still, the disagreement is shallow: my total stream of consciousness is available as a higher legislator, in a position to conclusively rule this ‘disagreement’ purely indexical, in such a way that no stage is in a position to put up a fight. This is why my sense that the present is special is so manifestly parochial and evaporates so swiftly.

By contrast, the embedded perspective of the totality of consciousness is unattainable. There is no such thing as the ‘hive mind’ fragmented into an aspect associated with the Hellie-subject, another aspect associated with the Chalmers-subject, another associated with the Anscombe-subject, and so forth. My embedded point of view is genuinely separate from Chalmers’s, Anscombe’s, and the rest: collectively, they stand only in external relations to one another. There is no unified consciousness subordinating all personal perspectives. Each personal perspective disagrees with all others about which pains are felt, which volitions are willed, which self-concern is legitimate. And the disagreement is deep: no unified embedded consciousness is available as a higher legislator, in a position to rule with any credibility that this disagreement is not genuine, is only purely indexical; try though one might to adopt this universal embedded perspective, one will fail, when one’s distinct selfhood overwhelms any sense of containment within a fully expansive field-being. This is why my sense that I am special is so manifestly objective, so firmly rooted in my understanding of the mental.

From the embedded perspective of my whole life, the present disappears at every moment; consciousness is sustained in the guise of a long-flowing stream. But any perspective capable of knocking out the individual subject’s embedded point of view would knock out consciousness, leaving behind a zombie. Load that zombie up with a soul-pellet; paint that soul-pellet in the most garish array of phenomenal properties your imagination allows: all that gets you is a cheerfully decorated zombie. Bring this cheerfully decorated zombie together with untold

others, and we find the constellation in our parable. Turn off all the lights but one (thanks to restrictions imposed by acquaintance) if you like: this might let me know which zombie I am (if I knew how to read the code), but it wouldn't restore my embedded perspective to reality. So I do not think that there is any obvious limitation in the scope of my personal perspective which we should attempt to reflect using *de se* content.

## 2.4 Hints from Eloise

### Why acquaintance?

Chalmers stipulatively introduces 'acquaintance' to name whatever relation between a subject and a phenomenal property-instance is responsible for the nature-revealing and epistemically justified status of self-predication of phenomenal attention-based Lagadonian concepts (285–7). But arguably, Lagadonian concepts are essentially nature-revealing, and the 'analyticity'-like status of the self-predications is arguably epistemic justification enough (Hellie 2011, sec. 3). If phenomenal attention grounds such concepts and ranges over exactly one's own phenomenal property-instances, I wonder why acquaintance isn't an idle wheel.

Maybe for this reason. The scope of acquaintance over *all* one's phenomenal properties contrasts with the partial scope of *occurrent* phenomenal attention, while the categoricity of acquaintance contrasts with *dispositional* phenomenal attention. Perhaps important work would be done by a broadly 'cognitive' relation to phenomenal properties that is total and categorical.

Work like the following. Something is distinctive about my cognitive stance toward my stream of consciousness: anything outside this stance, like your phenomenal properties, is 'dark' to me. If my phenomenal properties are part of the objective world, my thoughts about my phenomenal properties compete for space with my thoughts about the external world. And since my thoughts about phenomenal properties typically lose this competition, it isn't my thoughts, or any sort of occurrent attention grounding them, that provide this cognitive stance either: if they did, my own phenomenal properties would typically be dark to me—so that I

would then be *as* a zombie to myself. Since I am not as a zombie to myself, what is distinctive about my cognitive stance toward my phenomenal properties must be something beyond conceptual thought—but to preserve the location of phenomenal properties in the objective world, some tie to conceptual thought must be preserved in whatever does the job. That is why acquaintance, the categorical and total basis of phenomenal attention and in turn of conceptual thought about phenomenal properties, enters the picture.

### **The scope of acquaintance**

It is essential in this story that I am acquainted with *exactly* my phenomenal properties. Anything less and I am as a zombie in regard to what is left out; and what could stop the slide to leaving everything out? I would then have a full stock of phenomenal properties but be as a zombie in regard to all of them—in which case phenomenal properties and subjects wouldn't have anything to do with consciousness. And anything more and I could have acquaintance with your phenomenal properties, or the properties of my office furniture—in which case wouldn't I seem to myself to be part you and part desk?<sup>5</sup>

What explains this surprising limitation? In general when there is a relation, we can swap relata around with some freedom. I am taller than some people, as are you; other people are taller than me; still other people are taller than you; I could have been taller than some of the people who are in fact taller than me, and some of the people than whom I am in fact taller could have been taller than me. I am, we can agree, acquainted with something: but why any of my phenomenal-property-instances? Why all of them? Why none of anything else? And why necessarily so?

The answer: it is a 'conceptual truth' (291) that one must be acquainted with exactly one's phenomenal-property instances. It would be natural to understand this as a further enrichment of the conceptual role stipulated to hold of acquaintance. But this is in tension with the structure of the discussion. Stipulatively defined concepts are potentially over- or under-constrained: perhaps no relation

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<sup>5</sup>A scenario with special resonance for fans of David Cronenberg.

satisfies all the stipulations; perhaps many similar ones do. In ordinary theoretical practice, existence-and-uniqueness arguments undergird the coherence of discussion using such concepts. But no such argumentation is present here.

Perhaps then the introduction of acquaintance is, in a subsidiary mood not gaining official expression but driving some of the picture, ostensive rather than stipulative. Chalmers considers the proposal that we are ‘acquainted with acquaintance’ (286–7): if we are, this could serve as the basis of such ostension. The ‘conceptual truth’ about the scope of acquaintance could then be extracted from my nature-revealing concept of acquaintance.

If so, the status of clause (a) can be settled empirically. Does empirical reflection support the egalitarian claim that the objects of acquaintance are phenomenal properties rather than manifest external qualities?

No. Harman (1990) taught us that when Eloise looks at a tree, she does not experience any features as intrinsic features of her experience; nor can she find any intrinsic features of her experience to turn attention to: the only intrinsic features she can turn attention to are features of the presented tree, including relational features of the tree ‘from here’—and the same is true of me, too. That is the so-called ‘transparency of experience’, discussed in hundreds of papers building on Harman’s lead. The doctrine of transparency is of a piece with the Humean worries we have been developing: the illusory constellational view presents for attention ‘painted-in’ or ‘shining-forth’ phenomenal qualities, whereas our real embedded view presents no such things for attention but only physical qualities of one’s objective situation.

### **One bad apple**

Clause (4f) seeks a certain accommodation or rapprochement or detente with transparency. Perceptual<sup>6</sup> phenomenal features misrepresent the subject as acquainted with ‘perfect’ or ‘primitive’ or ‘Edenic’ nonphysical qualities of external

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<sup>6</sup>And ‘introspective’ (410–11): I acknowledge this qualification without highlighting it because I understand neither the qualification nor Chalmers’s reasons for introducing it; fortunately, it does not seem to play any important role.

objects.<sup>7</sup> We trust perception: that is why we think we are acquainted with such qualities.

That doesn't solve the problem with transparency. Transparency doesn't say just that we *can* turn nature-revealing attention to external properties. It also says that we *can't* turn attention to phenomenal properties. So (4a) is false (even if a weak-tea version of the claim that we can turn attention to external qualities is true, thanks very much).

We must look outside this volume for a clue about how (4a) is to be rescued. An unpublished lecture (Chalmers 2009) floats the idea that the data are actually compatible with (4a): I can tell whether I am seeing that that tree is green or merely thinking that that tree is green (in the dark of night, say), so I am aware of mental features after all. Maybe seeing and thinking as manifest are physiological rather than mental in the relevant sense? Either way, we can agree that I am 'aware' of mental features: what is disputed is the claim that this awareness is a kind of *attention*.

Another speculative answer: does perception somehow overwhelm in salience our Lagadonian self-ascription of phenomenal properties, so that we never really notice the latter? But, allegedly, our acquaintance with phenomenal features reflects their location 'at the heart of the mind rather than standing at a distance from it' (285). Why do we seek our essential nature by gazing outward, with our eyes, rather than inward, with our hearts? Is late-stage capitalism, with its advertising-driven valorization of the superficially enticing over the deeply fulfilling, to blame?

A superior explanation of the existence of conflict over (4a) is that, while (4a) is false, in the early 1990s (when Chalmers was putting his system together), almost everyone presupposed that (4a) had to be part of dualism (Martin 1998). Why? Lewis-style physicalism (Lewis 1966, 1994) builds in an 'absolutism' or error theory about perspective congenial to the egalitarian; Lewis set the terms of

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<sup>7</sup>So the view is that I can turn phenomenal attention to a representational property. I don't know what that means. I can turn attention to a quality like *blue*, but don't know what it would be to turn attention to *believing that Hume was a philosopher*. 'Turn attention to' in the sense of 'think about', sure—but that changes the subject.

the debate; so everyone presupposed egalitarianism—which requires (4a).

Thesis (4f) is problematic on its own. First, (4f) says that it is represented in perception that some objects of acquaintance are qualities of external entities. But then it is not a conceptual truth that I am acquainted with exactly my phenomenal quality-instances. Maybe I am part desk after all.

Second, (4f) says that in me, phenomenal-red is the property of representing that I am acquainted with primitive red. In Eden, phenomenal-red is the property of being acquainted with primitive red (411). I know the nature of phenomenal-red, so it doesn't have a hidden essence. But my Edenic counterpart and I have exactly the same view on things. So the difference in the identity of phenomenal-red is hidden to us. So its nature is not revealed after all. But phenomenal red had better not be, for my Edenic counterpart, an added extra alongside his acquaintance with primitive red. For then presumably he has a zombie twin acquainted with primitive red but without phenomenal red. This zombie is acquainted with a simple quality. And, sadly, the explanation of my knowledge that I am not a zombie appeals solely to my acquaintance with a simple quality (293): it places no restrictions on the nature of that quality.

In personal communication, Chalmers replies to these two worries by distinguishing between the acquaintance with the *instance* of the property I in fact have and the acquaintance with the *property* I perceptually misrepresent myself as having. Still, none less an authority than Merleau-Ponty apparently regarded the objects of our perceptual acquaintance as being instances of external qualities (Kelly 2007). Perhaps Merleau-Ponty could be accommodated by flipping the instance–property asymmetry the other way. But who knows? The issue isn't who is right or wrong here, but why the coherence and plausibility of a philosophical system should depend on our capacity to make phenomenological distinctions between such theory-laden claims.

## 2.5 Which David?

All of my evidence about Sam concerns her physical properties. So this evidence underdetermines my belief that Sam is not a zombie. Accordingly, the move from

evidence to belief is ‘ampliative’, involving inference to the best explanation. But ampliative inference to certainty is irrational (Lewis 1973, van Fraassen 1989), so IBE is inference to ‘presumption’ rather than to certainty (Veltman 1996). Presumption is defeasible: that is what distinguishes it from certainty, and what makes it OK to infer ampliatively to presumption (even though it is not OK to infer ampliatively to certainty). But, *ex hypothesi*, there could be no evidence to defeat my belief that Sam is not a zombie; accordingly, that alleged presumption is indistinguishable from certainty. And so, a mild pragmatism about the metaphysics of the doxastic recommends treating the belief as a case of certainty. (That last sentence was the move in the argument that, in my view, is the most tendentious.) But then either I am irrational to believe that Sam is not a zombie or my inference to this belief is not ampliative. Unfortunately, if the inference is not ampliative, my evidence entails that Sam is not a zombie. And if so, physical concepts entail phenomenal concepts after all. Egalitarian dualism collapses into Lewis-style a priori physicalism.

## 2.6 Ghosts, machines, and all that

Chalmers wrote in an early reply to a symposium on *The Conscious Mind* that ‘if it were not that the antecedent impulse to believe materialism were so strong (I share it, too), and my conclusions so hard to accept, I think the arguments would be relatively uncontroversial’ (Chalmers 1999). Yes: if the doctrines in (4) are correct, these arguments *should* be uncontroversial. But in what could the antecedent impulse to believe materialism consist if not our concepts of consciousness and matter? Pending a story about this psychological force (which must of course not dislodge modal rationalism), the plausibility of materialism supports the denial of (4).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The collapse remarked on in the previous subsection predicts that Lewis faces a similar problem. Correctly so: cf. Lewis 1995.



### 3 The inegalitarian alternative

What alternative is there to this system? On the *inegalitarian* stance, only my stream of consciousness is genuine (read the first-person pronoun ‘sloppily’ rather than ‘strictly’, as referring to the reader rather than the writer). This stance is at the center of the following system:<sup>9</sup>

- 1'. There are no subjects of experience; the unique stream of consciousness connects to the physical world by being the temporally extended perspective of *this creature*, the one who looks like the photo on my driver’s license;
- 2'. Basic truths about consciousness are of the form  $C\varphi$ , where  $C$  is an operator meaning something like ‘it is presented in consciousness that’ and  $\varphi$  is about the physical world;
- 3'. Self-knowledge of consciousness consists of its being the case that  $CC\psi$ ;
- 4'. What is cognitively distinctive about the first-person perspective on consciousness is grounded the a priori equivalence of  $C\psi$  with  $CC\psi$ —the ‘reflexivity’ of consciousness; attention of the sort that grounds Lagadonian concepts turns not inward but outward:
  - (a) The property-instances with which I am acquainted are exactly those manifest qualities of external bodies perceived by *this creature*;<sup>10</sup>
  - (b) If one directs perceptual attention on something, that thing is an object of one’s acquaintance;

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<sup>9</sup>The debate here is in many ways analogous to the ‘A-theory’/‘B-theory’ or ‘tenser’/‘detenser’ debate in philosophy of time: inegalitarians are A-theorists, egalitarians B-theorists. Inegalitarianism is considered and rejected as a version of ‘nonstandard realism’ about the self in Fine 2005*b*. Advocates or friends of inegalitarianism or something like it include Kant (1781/1787/1996), Wittgenstein (1921/1974), Carnap (1932), Kripke (1982, part III), Hare (2009), Johnston (2007), Hellie (2011). I expand on the view developed here in *Conscious Life* (in preparation).

<sup>10</sup>On the egalitarian system, acquaintance is a relation between a subject and an object; for the inegalitarian, it is a monadic property—perhaps better described as *presentedness*—of the object. In the interest of displaying the analogy between the positions, I slur over this distinction in the body text.

- (c) The types to which the objects of perceptual attention belong are candidate vehicles-slash-referents of Lagadonian concepts;
- (d) Predicating the corresponding Lagadonian concept of the bearer of an object of perceptual attention is knowledge;
- (e) Grasp of a Lagadonian concept of  $P$  suffices for knowledge of the nature of  $P$ ;

5'. I simulate (alternately: sympathize with, take up the perspective of) other creatures: when I do so, it becomes true that  $S(x, C \psi)$  ('it is simulated in regard to creature  $x$  that it is presented in consciousness that  $\psi$ '); physical information about the creature  $x$  makes a certain variety of simulation rationally mandatory, where this is a primitive non-conceptual rational mandate;<sup>11</sup> competent simulation of  $x$  is a sort of simulated 'being  $x$ ', and is therefore knowledge of what it is like to be  $x$ ; accordingly, my 'knowledge of other minds' is roughly 'synthetic a priori'; since simulation is a modification of consciousness,  $S(x, C \psi)$  is a priori equivalent to  $CS(x, C \psi)$ ;

6'. Consciousness is not a superadded extra alongside the material; rather, my stream of consciousness is a facet of physical reality apparent only from within *this creature*.

The inegalitarian is immune to the difficulties we have raised for the system of this volume:

- i. If there is only one stream of consciousness, no soul pellets are needed to keep streams of consciousness separate.
- ii. If facts about consciousness are of the form indicated, it would make sense to report what it is like in narrative, simply leaving the C operator implicit.

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<sup>11</sup>Perhaps it is a moral mandate, grounded in practical rationality; perhaps the mandate is more broadly 'ethical', stemming from the virtue of beneficence; perhaps it stems from an expanded conception of theoretical rationality that drives toward a nonpropositional sort of 'knowledge' based in love.

- iii. The inegalitarian can answer the vertiginous question—or perhaps can explain why it shouldn't be asked. Exactly one stream of consciousness is 'live'; exactly one stream of consciousness is found in reality. So the question 'why is this stream of consciousness (pointing to a bit of reality) the live one?' gets the swift answer 'it has no competition'. More emphatically: the only perspective on my stream of consciousness is my embedded perspective, and without two competing perspectives on my stream of consciousness, the vertiginous question can't get asked. Why the premiss? The only stream of consciousness is mine and the only perspective from which consciousness is apparent is the embedded perspective from a stream of consciousness.<sup>12</sup>
- iv. It is natural for the inegalitarian to locate truths about consciousness in some sense 'outside' the 'objective' world (so that from the point of view of the objective, at least, nothing is special about me). If so, it is natural to posit a sui generis epistemic stance of 'reflection' within which consciousness knows itself. If so, there is no need to repurpose acquaintance from its role in presenting manifest objective qualities.
- v. Truths about the consciousness of others are grounded in modifications of my own consciousness, so I know them as directly as I know myself. Modifying my own consciousness in a certain way in regard to a certain creature is rationally mandated by objective information of a certain sort about that creature: in that sense there is a sort of 'objectivity' to knowledge of other minds.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>To paraphrase Jonas, 'only consciousness can understand consciousness'. That is the lesson of our parable.

Are there other similar questions the inegalitarian can't answer? What about: 'why is *this creature* the one whose perspective is live'? But *this creature* is synonymous with 'the creature whose perspective is live'. I can locate *this creature* in the objective world easily enough by looking out the window and checking the time, so the very occasional bout of uncertainty whether *this creature* is *that guy* typically vanishes swiftly. Very intricate circumstances can be contrived in which such uncertainty is hard to resolve Elga 2000, but as I argue in *Semantics, Self, and World* (in preparation), those are cases in which my rationality is impaired.

<sup>13</sup>The closest thing in this volume to a case for egalitarianism is the following puzzling remark:

vi. But this rational mandate is not to *conceive* of facts in a certain way given that I have *conceived* of facts in a certain other way: it is rather to *manufacture* truths of a certain kind given that I have conceived of facts in a certain way. So there is no conceptual entailment here. If zombies have seemed to be conceivable, that is perhaps because concepts do not rule them out. But it does not follow that they are conceivable. Rather, my knowledge of other minds is not a kind of conceiving at all. Accordingly, there is no failure of psychophysical supervenience.

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'ignorance [of what it will be like for Mary to see red for the first time] does not evaporate from the objective viewpoint. . . . [So] phenomenal knowledge is not a variety of indexical or demonstrative knowledge at all. Rather, it is a sort of objective knowledge of the world, not essentially tied to any viewpoint' (163). Knowledge of other minds is, we can agree, 'objective' in the sense of *disciplined*. But it does not follow that it is 'objective' in the sense of disciplined, granting physical omniscience, by *further objective facts*. It might rather be disciplined by *internal norms of virtuous simulation*. These norms need not be disciplined in turn by anything deeper. (Special thanks to Andrew Sepielli for helping me to see this distinction.)

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