

CHAPTER 8

QUALIA AND CONSCIOUSNESS (II)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is a sequel to the preceding chapter. It contains issues pertaining to qualia and consciousness not scrutinized earlier. At the outset, the relation between qualia and consciousness - given Dennett's characterization of them - is more fully explored. Then, Dennett's notion of qualia as illusory is more closely examined. Subsequently, we take a detour to analyze Dennett's identification of qualia as dispositional brain states. Following this, relations between judgement and experience within the context of Dennett's formulation are single out for critical review, which mainly involves examining Dennett's anchoring of his consciousness thesis on conceptual grounds.

8.2 Qualia and Consciousness: A Dichotomy?

Dennett believes as a consequence of his Multiple Drafts model (which is his model of consciousness), consciousness is a content-system (Dennett 1993b: 55), best seen analogous to mental fame (MNM 929). Clearly, to Dennett, consciousness is in fact cerebral celebrity (RWEC). It is the result of the dominance or the winning of a content-bearing state vis-à-vis other fame seeking

content bearers. In other words, it is the content states that “persevere, that monopolize resources long enough to achieve certain typical and ‘symptomatic’ effects – on memory, on the control of behavior and so forth” (MNM 929; Dennett 1996i: 7, GR 547, RLM 293, Dennett 1994b: 179). By contrast, qualia is basically seen as dispositional consequence of discriminative brain states (or judgement). As discussed earlier, to Dennett, qualia is figment of imagination,¹ mere dispositional properties of the brain (CE 373, 383, 431, 460; QQ 535; BC 143-144, 146; Dennett 1991f).² These are important postulations constituting the crux of Dennett’s theoretical beliefs. As such, we review below the soundness of these assertions.

If this is what Dennett believes, the way the above is characterized nonetheless seems to sunder conscious experiences into two disjunct existence of some kind. Alienation of the reality of phenomenality from that of consciousness only leaves conflicting strain on Dennett’s theorizing that is not easily reconciled. Let’s explore this in more detail. We see Dennett has not overtly argued for the presence of consciousness or for that matter its requisite existence so that any

¹ “Postulating a ‘real seeming’ in addition to the judging or taking expressed in the subject’s report is multiplying entities beyond necessity” (CE 134; see also CE 364, FFP 8). “[T]here are no colors, images, sounds, gestalts, mental acts, feeling tones or other Proustian *objets trouves* to delight the inner eye; only featureless – even wordless – conditional-intentions-to-say-that-p” (AP 97; see also BC 141). And indeed, “[t]he standard presumption is that blindsight subjects make judgements (well, guesses) in the absence of any qualia, and I use this presumption to build the case that ordinary experience is not at all that different.....My contention is that what people have in mind when they talk of ‘visual’ consciousness, ‘actually seeing’ and the like, is nothing over and above some collection or other of these missing talents (discriminatory, regulatory, evaluative, etc.)” (Dennett 1993e: 149, 151).

² “I claim, then, that sensory qualities are nothing other than the dispositional properties of cerebral states to produce certain further effects in the very observers whose states they are” (BC 146; see also RWE 233).

phenomenality is possible at all. For instance, Dennett in making the comparison of our color qualia with that of a robot has the following to say.

Recall...the CADBLIND Mark I Vorsetzer. Suppose we put a color picture of Santa Claus in front of it and ask it whether the red in the picture is deeper than the red of the American flag. This is what it would do: retrieve its representation of Old Glory from memory, and locate the "red" stripes (they are labeled 'red #163' in its diagram). It would then compare this red to the red of the Santa Claus suit in the picture in front of its camera, which happens to be transduced by its color graphics systems as red #172. It would compare the two reds by subtracting 163 from 172 and getting 9, which it would interpret, let's say, as showing that Santa Claus red seems somewhat deeper and richer than American flag red....It is obvious that the CADBLIND Mark I doesn't use pigment to render its memory (or current perception), but neither do we. The CADBLIND Mark I has - I will allow - a rather simple, impoverished color space...There is *no qualitative difference* between the CADBLIND's performance of such a task and our own. The discriminative states of the CADBLIND Mark I have content in just the same way, and for just the same reasons, as the discriminative brain states....The CADBLIND Mark I certainly doesn't have any qualia, so it does follow from my comparison that I am claiming that we don't have qualia either. The sort of difference that people imagine there to be between any machine and any human experiencer is one I am firmly denying. There is no such difference. There just seems to be (CE 374-375, emphasis added).

Consciousness, the way Dennett would have it does not come into the picture because it comes about only upon the advent of some competitive processes amongst content bearing states (Dennett and Kinsbourne 1995: 810), while as we saw above, judgement *per se* seems sufficient condition for seeming. This nontrivially suggests that awareness or consciousness is superfluous in the characterization of qualia.³ If qualia or phenomenality is exhausted strictly by judgement, we should then expect to experience this 'seeming' without ever needing the presence of consciousness therein. For Dennett indubitably believes that "the phenomenal world is the *emergent* product of all the corner turning [in other words judgement], not the preamble or final raw material before the corner of consciousness is turned" (GR 510, emphasis added),⁴ and even more pointedly,

³ It is true that Dennett's account of consciousness does not entail the turning on of some inner lights, but still, we are surely aware of the phenomena (qualia). That needs explaining!

⁴ That is, it is not some preliminary or final materials awaiting entrance into consciousness in order to be appreciated.

qualia is in fact the logical construct out of judgement (QQ 529, AP 109; see also note 52, p.260 in Chapter 7). However, this dichotomy sounds counterintuitive at best, because our experiences are largely conscious, the converse is of course almost always true because necessarily there is, in our consciousness, the presence of some form of qualitative concomitant. The same seems to hold in Dennett's own account for he also believes that qualia is "partially but *not* entirely independent of consciousness" (Dennett 1991f: 40, emphasis added; BC 144). In fact, in describing his own *content of consciousness* (CE 407), we see Dennett recounts thus:

[g]reen-golden sunlight was streaming in the window that early spring day, and the thousands of branches and twigs of the maple tree in the yard were still clearly visible through a mist of green buds, forming an elegant pattern of wonderful intricacy. The windowpane is made of old glass, and has a scarcely detectable wrinkle line in it, and as I rocked back and forth, this imperfection in the glass caused a wave of synchronized wiggles to march back and forth across the delta of branches, a regular motion superimposed with remarkable vividness on the more chaotic shimmer of the twigs and branches in the breeze. Then I noticed that this visual metronome in the tree branches was locked in rhythm with the Vivaldi concerto grosso I was listening to as 'background music' for my reading...My conscious thinking, and especially the enjoyment I felt in the combination of sunny light, Vivaldi violins, flipping branches – plus the pleasure I took in just thinking about it all (CE 406-407).

In Dennett's flashback above, qualia and consciousness seem almost inseparable. Given this, there is then disparity in the dichotomy above that Dennett apparently needs to reconcile to harmonize the two apparently opposing accounts of awareness.⁵

⁵ Dennett does, however, affirm in passing that phenomenality is (in some ways) realized in cerebral celebrity (GR 547, RWEC 227-228), without really justifying further how exactly this could be so. For we note Dennett also says that "it is always an open question whether any particular content thus discriminated will eventually appear as an element in conscious experience" (CE 113).

On the one hand, if we grant that there has to be some kind of mental celebrity in order for phenomenality to become conscious (C), this seems redundant because on Dennett's account of qualia, dispositional outcome of judgement already accounts for the (conscious) experience. Besides, if phenomenality entails some sort of rivalry amongst contentful states, this again seems to run counter to what he says about qualia as dispositional outcome of judgement. However, if on a more *charitable* reading, we grant that something like (C) is needed, this would then suggest that disposition of judgemental state, for some reasons, could not by itself occasion experience, but has to in turn cling on something like cerebral celebrity to do the work. If this is the case, then the notion that qualia (which clearly entails experience) as the dispositional effect of judgement would, in consequence, become questionable (this would also probably put to doubt his thesis that qualia is fictional because according to Dennett mental celebrity is invariably real). To hazard an opinion, Dennett probably has to say something like qualia is the *dispositional* outcome of the strife amongst various judgemental states to monopolize resources for more lasting influences (ala his consciousness thesis).⁶

But Dennett, of course, has said none of this. So, one way or the other, it is certainly not easy to harmonize these seemingly irreconcilable accounts. Moreover, if we are to seriously consider accepting the preceding proposition, the notion that qualia is part of cerebral celebrity, is also not without problem. For,

⁶ Or, alternatively, qualia is dispositional effects of judgements but has to await the outcome of *competition* amongst the respective judgemental states to see which of this could become

consciousness, which Dennett takes to be real, to come to grasp or aware of the impalpable dispositional propensity is quite unusual. Up next, lets examine in more detail issues arising from seeing qualia as mere confabulation, as oppose to treating it on par with the realism of consciousness. It argues that seeing qualitative properties as fictional is a nonstarter, a mistaken point to anchor one's investigation.

8.3 Qualia as Figment of Imagination

Parallel this is a host of difficulties it raises for Dennett's theory, which unless more closely examined, is likely to escape notice. Specifically, how could something unreal produce or generate something as fine grain and rich as our phenomenal experiences? In view of its controversial nature, Dennett ought to have at least provided a more lengthy and cogent argument to support this rather unusual claim by showing, for instance, how something as lavish and rich, yet dispositional in effects, could occur in other phenomena outside qualia or, for that matter, how some nonentity like qualia could be summoned into existence in virtue of judgement, instead of just taking it as first principle to build his case.

Perhaps it is worth looking at Lyons incisive comments on Dennett's intentional stance, germane to the point to be raised later.

conscious.

When I say that Fred will go home now because he hates crowds and knows that there are only five minutes till the end of the baseball match, and when, lo and behold, within a minute or two Fred stands up, leaves his seat, and then the stadium, this is an incredibly precise and true prediction that I have made. It must reflect psychological facts of some sort, otherwise it looks as if I have made a true prediction in psychology on the basis of a false or 'make believe' picture of the relevant facts. It looks as if I have made a successful prediction without any firm basis. If that were so, we would have to say that it was quite magical and mysterious how I ever did arrive at any true prediction by employing the intentional stance.....To put it another way, if my predictions based upon the intentional stance were predictions based upon a picture which had no relation at all to the facts about why humans behave as they do, then my predictions ought to be about as useful and precise as an astrologer's predictions. If I take up the astrological stance to you, then I might depict you as influenced by the constellation Virgo, as you were born on 6 September, and after noting that Virgo is in such-and-such a position in the sky this month, as seen from the northern hemisphere, and in such-and-such a relation to other star clusters, declare that such-and-such will befall you. But any predictions I made would be either so vague as to be useless or just plain wrong, or else a one-off piece of incredibly fortuitous guessing. This would be so because there is no causal connection between distant clusters of stars and individual human action.....(Lyons 1995: 28).

In somewhat similar manner, one could say the same of Dennett's account of phenomenal experiences. If phenomenal experiences are nothing but confabulations or mere "phantom residue" (ZH 36; RWEC 235),⁷ it is puzzling why one is not led astray by these largely hallucinatory "brute happenstance" (CE 404), but thrives in spite of it.⁸ Illusions and phantasms are phenomena that

⁷ Says Dennett: "[a] novel is a real physical object, made of paper and ink and such; there is not also a set of real but nonphysical objects 'in between' the novel and the work it portrays – a world of *phantasms* created by the novelist's words. My position with regard to *seemings* is parallel: There are real physical bodies and real physical events in their brains that serve to *project* a fictional world, and there is not also a set of real seemings in between the brain events and the world they depict" (2000a: 366, emphasis added).

⁸ We could look at examples in which phenomenal properties play important role in the survival repertory of living organisms, which tend to speak against Dennett's illusionary account of phenomenality. On the one hand, we see that there are specific parts or organs (for instance, the chromatophore, the highly developed avian color vision and their eye droplets, the subtlety of the language of odour and olfactory among animals) that is actually responsible in producing these phenomenal properties, which more often than not, make a difference in enhancing their chances of survival. Dennett points out, for instance, that "[t]he basic categories of our color spaces (and of course our odor spaces and sound spaces, and the rest) are shaped by selection pressures" (CE 381). If the consequence of this contrivances of nature are mere dispositional, it appears odd, at least on design ground, to have specific organs 'designed' only to generate some potentially misleading will-o-the-wisp or "disposition [that] is purely epiphenomenal, a by product of ... wiring with no significance" (CE 404). Consider, for instance, bats that depend on echolocation to hunt, the genus *Noctilio*, a fishing bat, "[t]hough the bat's sonar cannot penetrate the water to locate completely submerged objects, a projection of 1/16 of an inch – or even a *tiny* ripple made by a fish swimming under water – is all the *Noctilio* needs to discover its prey" (Stevens and

delude rather than illuminate or even inform.⁹ One is misled, for instance, by various form of illusions and mirages. Unless adequately justified, employing “illusion or figment of your imagination” (BC 132)¹⁰ as *explanan* without also taking into account its tendency to misrepresent (stimuli) is risky and self-defeating. At best, illusions are false or incorrect perceptions, a deviation from truth!

When your perceptual systems actually deceive you into experiencing a stimulus pattern in a manner that is demonstrably incorrect, you are experiencing an illusion (Zimbardo and Gerrig 1999: 147).

Illusions are sometimes regarded merely as deviations from fact: but this is not a sufficient description. In the first place it is not helpful to call any deviation from fact illusion. All observations – whether by senses or instruments – suffer random disturbances, so that they fluctuate round some average reading or report. It is not helpful to call such fluctuation an ‘illusion.’ Illusions should, rather, be regarded as systematic deviations from fact. But then, we may ask, ‘What is fact?’ We may either take facts to be the objects of statements, or of perceptions, which are generally accepted as true; or we may take facts to be what are actually – in some God’s eye view of things – true (Gregory 1973: 51).

Warshofsky 1980: 138). They can also accurately “detect and avoid wires less than 0.04 of an inch in diameter” (Stevens and Warshofsky 1980: 126; see also Griffin 1960, Neuweiler 2000, Yalden and Morris 1975). Phenomenal properties seem employed here as means to an end with ‘calculated’ precision that does not seem to fit nicely into the rather serendipitous and delusional (like the mind is being tricked into thinking there is seeming) nature of dispositional effects, the way Dennett characterizes it. This ‘perfection’ is the upshot of eons of evolutionary experimentation that is unlikely the result of some tinkering in illusory fantasy. If one does not believe that imaginary rifle could kill a lion, there is no more reason to suppose that some mere conjure-up hallucinatory fiction could help the bats locate its prey. Even if we grant that Dennett may in fact be right that animals do not have phenomenality (see Chapter 6), yet arguments above would still apply to humans (though less impressively). Notably, if phenomenal experiences are illusory, it appears odd (and in someway counterproductive) that we actually have to take the trouble to make this supposed illusory images (our phenomenal experiences that is) into more refine and sharper focus (as if trying to magnify or exacerbate rather than attenuating these illusory effects) with optical aids (e.g., glasses, microscopes and telescopes).

⁹ Note, for instance, its serendipitous and capricious nature, the way Dennett would have it: we can bring “the quale into existence by the same sort of license as novelists have to determine the hair color of their characters by fiat. We do not ask how Dostoevski knows that Raskolnikov’s hair is light brown” (QQ 529).

¹⁰ Dennett identifies figment of imagination with qualia (CE 346, 350-351, 353, 375, 434).

8.4 Qualia and Disposition

There is another important related issue which needs addressing. By adopting and modifying on the thought experiment of inverted spectrum, Dennett seeks to argue indirectly for the dispositional qualities of qualia (CE 389, 390-398).¹¹ Essentially, Dennett seeks to show, through the thought experiment, that qualia could not be altered (inverted) independently of its dispositional propensities, hence affirming his views that qualia are the consequence of dispositional properties of discriminative brain states.¹² Hence, we see Dennett surmising that "[i]f there are no qualia over and above the sum total of dispositions to react, the idea of holding the qualia constant while adjusting the dispositions is self contradictory" (CE 398).¹³ Specifically, it is purported to deny Otto, the spokesperson for phenomenology in Dennett's exposition.

¹¹ This allusion to dispositional properties is critical to Dennett construction of his theory because its postulation enables Dennett to account for qualia without having to accord it real existence. For instance, it is commonplace to regard seeing the 'red' of traffic light as the cause for stepping the car's brake. But on his construal, the *causal* property of red is circumvented. Stepping the brake is seen as dispositional properties of discriminative brain states, without having the qualitative experience of red appearing anywhere in the causal chain. Qualia, on this construal, becomes the effect (illusory seeming that is), rather than the cause (MNM 927).

¹² For instance, he says "[t]he idea that it is something in addition to the inversion of all one's reactive dispositions, so that, if they were renormalized the inverted qualia would remain, is simply part of the tenacious myth of the Cartesian Theater" (CE 398).

¹³ Dennett seems to see qualia in the following terms. Upon the sipping of coffee, there are the not so easily separable effects of "dispositions to *generate or produce* qualia and dispositions to react to the qualia once they are produced" (QQ 530, emphasis added). Or similar claim in other context: qualia as "downstream effects of experiences (reactions to particular colors, verbal reports, effects on memory....) ...[or] the upstream causal *progenitors* of experiences (activity in one cortical region or another)" (RWEC 233, emphasis added). In response to criticism, Dennett has also elaborated on the followings: "Shoemaker seems to go along with the natural but treacherous assumption that reactive dispositions must involve the person reacting to a quale, presented somehow to the reactor, and causing, by its presentation, the reaction... For instance, here's how pain works: the pain-networks produce (somewhat central?) the awfulness quale, which is then the very property to which 'one' reacts with abhorrence. My view is that this confuses cause and effect; it is the reactions that compose the 'introspectible property' and it is through reacting that one 'identifies' or 'recognizes' the property" (MNM 927).

That cannot be all there is to it.... for while that complex of mere dispositions might be the basis or source, somehow, for my particular quale of pink, they could all be changed without changing my intrinsic quale, or my intrinsic quale could change, without changing that manifold of mere dispositions. For instance, my qualia could be inverted without inverting all my dispositions. I could have all the reactivities and associations that I now have for green to the accompaniment of the quale I now have for red, and vice versa (CE 389).

The thought experiment Dennett relies on to support his case, however, does not seem to justify the strong conclusion he wishes to draw. What Dennett's writing shows is it is not implausible that qualia correlates (co-exist with) reactive dispositions,¹⁴ but his illustration has not, by any means, proven thereby that reactive dispositions are inseparable from qualia experiences.¹⁵ If so, then Dennett's claim that "no one thinks for a moment that the-way things-look is ever actually divorced from the subject's reactive disposition" (CE 392) is therefore unwarranted. Patients with phobia (for colors, heights, snakes, monkeys and whatnots) could be treated and hence free from irrational reactive dispositions (abnormal fear and all the other adverse accompanying physical reactions) to phobic objects.¹⁶ In this instance, subject's reactive disposition to phobic objects

¹⁴ Upon surgical inversion of qualia, "[a] difference in qualia would be detectable after all, if it were a difference that developed rather swiftly in a single person. But this is only half the battle, for the imagined neurosurgical prank has also switched all your reactive dispositions; not only do you say your color experiences have all been discombobulated, but your nonverbal color related behavior has been inverted as well. The edginess you used to exhibit in red light you now exhibit in green light, and you've lost the fluency with which you used to rely on various color-coding schemes in your life. (If you play basketball for the Boston Celtics, you keep passing the ball mistakenly to the guys in the red uniforms.)" (CE 391).

¹⁵ Dennett's discussion henceforth seems to focus primarily on reactive disposition rather than disposition in general.

¹⁶ Lormand uses another illustration to refute Dennett's point, which is well worth quoting. "Consider, for example, unexercised dispositions of an experience. Suppose a person is very poor, and therefore (unknownst to her) the taste of coffee disposes her, if paid one dollar to say 'Shazam' when she tastes coffee, to say 'Shazam.' Does this 'idiosyncratic reactive dispositions' help to determine what its like for her to taste coffee? Presumably not. Suppose she is slowly drinking a cup of coffee while watching the stock market reports, according to which her wealth is oscillating considerably, which in turn (unknownst to her) oscillates her disposition to say 'Shazam' if paid. Desperately, trying to console herself, she moans, 'Even if I can rely on nothing

is presumably reversed (cured through cognitive and behavioral treatments), but this by no means inverts their experience of the object.¹⁷ If this is correct, there is then nothing to stop one from postulating some independent pathways that subserve reactive dispositions differently from that of qualia, which then supports the claim (as seen, for instance, in the thought experiment that involves two neurosurgeon wiring teams (CE 391-392)) that qualia can be distinct from dispositional reactions. Dennett, however, tries to block this possibility by resorting to the *raison d'être* of the Multiple Drafts.

There is no line that can be drawn across the causal 'chain' from eyeball through consciousness to subsequent behavior such that all reactions to x happens after it and consciousness of x happens before it. This is because it is not a simple causal chain, but a causal network, with multiple paths on which Multiple Drafts are being edited simultaneously and semi-independently. The qualophile's story would make sense if there were a Cartesian Theater, a special place in the brain where the conscious experience happened. If there were such a place, we could bracket it with the two switcheroos, leaving inverted qualia in the Theater, while keeping all the reactive dispositions normalized. Since there is no such Cartesian Theatre....*There is no coherent way to tell the necessary story.* There is no way to isolate the properties presented in consciousness from the brain's multiple reactions to its discriminations... (CE 392-393, emphasis added).

However, if this is the case, it is far from clear how Dennett finds his insistence on the belief in the correspondence between alterations in reactive disposition with qualia inversion obvious (CE 392). Because if the reasoning of Multiple Drafts is correct and reactions (reactive dispositions) to X cannot be appropriately placed in right successive order with consciousness (also qualia) of X, for "there

else in this world, at least I can rely on the taste of this coffee.' We have no reason to doubt the constancy of her taste-qualia, simply because of the change in her unexercised dispositions to say 'Shazam.' Similarly, qualia seem unaffected by an experience's exercised dispositions to produce wholly and clearly unconscious reactions – suppose one retains a conscious liking for coffee over a period of time, but during this time for the usual sordid reasons one develops a deeply subconscious Freudian dislike for coffee. Would coffee taste-qualia be altered simply by this wholly unconscious change?" (Lormand 1994: 131-132).

is no *coherent* way to tell the necessary story," Dennett's alleged relation in the juxtaposition of reactive disposition with qualia ought to be equally indeterminate, and we should be equally oblivious to it. Since relations between input and output "is accomplished in many different places with many different and largely independent means" (CE 398), "it does not follow from the fact that we are equipped to make sequence judgements about events in our experience that there is any occurrence in real time of a sequence of neural representations of the events in the order judged" (Dennett 1996b: 163). More pointedly, Dennett believes that "subjective sequence of conscious experience [qualia] does not always line up with the *objective* sequence of the events in your brain that *determine* your subjective experience [or phenomenal experiences]...The order in which events seem to happen to you in your stream of consciousness is not the same as the order of events occurring in your brain which are the very vehicles of those contents in your experience" (Dennett 1996i: 17, emphasis added; Dennett 1995d: 11).¹⁸

So, if reactive dispositions (to X for example) could not be placed in faithful correspondence with appearance of qualia due to multiple editing and revising processes, there is also no reason to expect Dennett's concurrent juxtaposition of

¹⁷ A search in the literature of phobia studies does not prove otherwise, see Davey (1997), amongst others, for a more recent assessment.

¹⁸ That is, even though if onset of Q_1 (qualia) seems to correspond to variable that determine experiences, say R_1 (reactive responses in brain), if the above account is to be seriously heeded, we cannot thereby conclude that Q_1 is individuated via R_1 , because ordering of experiences may not necessarily coincide with the ordering of events that result in the experience. In other words, if we have the following sequence of subjective experiences (Q_1, Q_2, Q_3 and Q_4), as well as the corresponding order of reactive events (R_1, R_2, R_3 , and R_4), according to Dennett, there could be no simple one-to-one match between any of these R_s and Q_s .

reactive disposition with qualia to be positively determinate. Ultimately, let us see what Dennett actually underscores by way of conclusion (in the *above* context) by his appeal to the Laffer curve. "Recall the Neo-Laffer curve"¹⁹...it is not at all a logical or geometric necessity that there be a single value of a discriminated variable that can be singled out as the *value of the variable in consciousness* [or the experience of X in discussion above] " (CE 395, emphasis added). Given this, identifying how qualia is altered as a result of change in its determining variable is equally onerous, for the metaphor of Laffer curve applies here as is elsewhere. So, if these arguments hold, Dennett's postulated relation between reactive dispositions and qualia seems to have betrayed the demand of his own theory.

8.5 Qualia and Concept

Meanwhile, it is instructive to look at Dennett's treatment of the relation between judgement and experience from another perspective. According to Dennett, concurring with Tye, "I base my claim on the belief that 'the central concept of phenomenal experience or seeming can only be understood in terms of *concepts* pertaining to judgement or belief'" (MNM 921, italics mine). This section briefly explores Dennett's reliance on *conceptual* uptake to individuate experiences.²⁰ If

¹⁹ A curve is a line that traces relationship between variables. So is a neo-Laffer curve. But the twists and turns of the curve, which takes on shape of complexity not unlike that of chaotic system (like a knot tangled in confusion, many times over) makes any clear identification of the causal relationship in any direction between the parameters impossible (see CE 109-111, Dennett 1992d: 8-10).

²⁰ "What a genuine seer must do is somehow take in and 'categorize' or 'recognize' or 'discriminate' or 'identify' or...in some other way 'judge' the presence of something...With such uptake there is seeing" (GR 513). Or to put it slightly differently, "to 'discriminate' or 'recognize'

we take Dennett's favorite metacontrast, the phi phenomenon and the bizarre examples of phantom limb as the case in point, "one can continue to undergo illusion even when one knows that things are not as they appear. It is equally possible not to believe what one seems to see" (Bermudez and Macpherson 1998:

1) For instance, in the case of the Muller-Lyer illusion,

which is inevitably mentioned when discussing the modularity of perception. We are told that the two lines are of the same length and if need be, we can measure with a ruler. The illusion persists, even after it is explained to us, arguing for inflexible perceptual mechanisms that constantly err despite 'corrections' (Nakayama 2001: 748).

So, apparently, we have here a case where concepts tend to run counter to experiences. We believe one thing yet experience another. These experiences persist nonetheless regardless of the concepts we hold. Though relying on concepts to individuate experiences may not be entirely mistaken, arguably it is inadequate. As was noted, "[t]raining can build more complex concepts of mental states. However, such concepts do not seem sufficient for changing experience, since one can acquire complex theoretical concepts about wine-experiences and music-experiences by reading books, for example, without the associated changes in one's experiences" (Lormand 1994: 139).²¹

Lets look at some examples.²² Consider this. One sees something, say a cow (X), but lets suppose X is later contorted by some visual devices (fancy goggle for

or 'judge' or 'turn the corner' is simply to *determine* some determinable aspect of content within a space of possibilities" (Dennett 1996b: 164, emphasis added).

²¹ Dennett does not seem to have given any cogent arguments here beyond appealing, like the case of complexity, to our imagination. So, we see Dennett blames our failure to see that conceptual contents could exhaust the richness of phenomenal experiences as the failure or the inadequacy of imagination (Dennett 1993e: 150).

²² In some ways, some of these points are also briefly noted by Tye (1993: 895-896). But Dennett's response leaves the conceptual underpinning of his approach untouched, leaving it

instance) and looks instead very much like a horse.²³ In all likelihood, we may still judge the same, yet our experiences or our seeing is no longer identical. Or we may identify a shade of color as XYZ, but it turns out to be ZYX. Surely, our concept is changed, yet experience remains the same. Besides, concept imputation is not fixed, it could change with time and it is not uncommon that two persons may see similar thing, yet possess distinct concepts. In these instances, one's experiences outrun the concept needed to individuate them (this likely explains the largely indescribability of experience, otherwise if experience is purely conceptual, ineffability of experience would not be that insurmountable). As it is also certainly plausible in spite of the experiences, one may not possess the necessary concept to explicate it. Besides, one could, for example, furnish the congenitally blind with all the content (proposition) imaginable, yet arguably, if she has no experience of the phenomenon, she would not experience anything of significance.²⁴

There exists literature that raises doubts vis-à-vis theories that regard experiences as exhausted by conceptual content. Peacocke (2001: 239n1) gives a good summary (see also other related comments, viz., Raffman 1993: 160n12, Thompson 1995: 291, Cam 1987: 338, Block 1994a: 33-37, Dretske 1994: 41-54), by which Dennett does not seem to have given much attention in discussions despite the fact that his theory is one of its important proponents (albeit in

vague instead by arguing that judgement on his construal is not something one endorses (MNM 921-922). We would pick this up again in later part of the chapter.

²³ Ignore the exaggeration for the sake of argument.

degenerate forms). We see, pertaining to the above, Dennett asserts that “[t]he phenomenon of consciousness depends on its subject having a certain family of concepts... In *Consciousness Explained* I speak of consciousness depends on its associated concepts” (GR 550; see also Dennett 1996b: 169, AP 95, 97; Rey 1994: 285), and pledges further that the “ultimate products in consciousness of, say, the processes of perception, to be judgements, conceptual or propositional episodes” (AP 112; Dennett 2001g: 133).²⁵

Though Dennett may not have deemed it important to come to terms with quandaries that arise as a result of this underlying commitment, in one part of his writing, however, he provides some sketchy justification to his conviction that content grounds (or exhausts) experiences: “propositions, officially, are not the same as sentences in any medium, and as *abstractions*, they come in all sizes. There is no upper bound on the ‘amount of content’ in a single proposition, so a single, swift, rich ‘propositional episode’ might have so much content, in its brainish, nonsentential way, that an army of Prousts might fail to express it exhaustively in a library of volumes” (Dennett 1993e: 150, emphasis added;

²⁴ All the above was initially conceived quite independent of the literature, but as it is, it coincides with most of those that have been raised before (in the literature). So, there is nothing novel to it.
²⁵ “[I]t turns out that consciousness, like love and money is a phenomenon that does indeed depend to a surprising extent on its associated concepts. Although, like love, it has an elaborate biological base, like money, some of its most significant features are borne along on the culture, not simply inherent, somehow, in the physical structure of its instances. So if I am right, and I succeed in overthrowing some of those concepts, I will threaten with extinction whatever phenomenon of consciousness depend on them” (CE 24). Further, by linking consciousness with some sort of software, Dennett endorses Julian Jaynes thesis of the primacy of concept over experiences. As he puts it: “[s]oftware, after all, is just concepts” (BC 130). Meanwhile, “[o]ne reason, then, why you can’t make a computer that feels pain is that our concept of pain is not a pure psychological concept but also ethical, social, and parochial, so that whatever we put inside our computer or robot will not avail unless it brings in its train these other considerations, a matter over which our control, as computer designers, is worse than limited” (BS 198).

Dennett 1996b: 162).²⁶ Dennett is here, clearly by means of abstractness, bestows propositions (concepts) with ultra rich content that allows it to accommodate and perhaps even account for the richness of phenomenal qualities.

Dennett contends that richness of phenomenal quality has something to do with degree of abstractness in proposition. However, as we shall see, the allusion to abstractness is not without problems. Consider a close analogy, abstractness in arts. On the construal of Dennett's theory, the content of art, as we experience it, ought to exist in some propositional forms, otherwise as far as Dennett's theory is concerned, there is no way it could be experienced. But the supposed relation between abstractness of proposition and phenomenal experiences may not necessarily hold. A painting in the genre of realism depicting luscious colorful scenery is certainly phenomenally rich. But its abstractness is as good as nil! By contrast, we could have a highly abstract piece of art work (conceptual art for instance) that is qualitatively very unimpressive. Of course, Dennett may not be persuaded,²⁷ but at least, it caution us to be mindful in generalizing relations, if there is any, between abstractness and phenomenal richness.

²⁶ But what is a proposition? "Propositions...are the theoretical entities with which we identify, or measure, beliefs. For two believers to share a belief is, by definition, for them to believe one and the same proposition....They are, by mutually agreed philosophical convention, the abstract meanings shared by all sentences that ...mean the same thing...Propositions are more like dollars than numbers! This goat is worth \$50. And how much is it worth in Greek drachmas, or Russian rubles (on what day of the week!) – and it is worth more or less today than it was in ancient Athens or as part of Marco Polo's expeditionary supplies? There is no doubt that a goat always has a value to its owners, and there is no doubt that we can fix a rough, operational measure of its value by executing – or imagining ourselves to execute – an exchange for money, or gold dust, or bread, or whatever. But there is no fixed, neutral, eternal system of measuring economic value, and likewise there is no fixed, neutral, eternal system for measuring meaning by the propositionful" (KM 45-48).

²⁷ Dennett may argue instead that the abstractness of the proposition (that governs our experiences of art) is dissimilar with the abstractness we gather from looking at pictures. Or he may even argue

If the foregoing is not unsound, Dennett seems to need separate and independent justification for his assertion that propositional content exhausts phenomenal experiences, because *prima facie*, it is at least counterintuitive how abstractness of proposition *per se* – *theoretical postulations* borne entirely from conventional discourse in philosophy – itself an unstable doctrine plagued with grueling interpretation problems could be hailed responsible in accounting for richness of experiences.²⁸

Elsewhere, Dennett drives home the point well (in other context). “Refutation by caricature is a pointless game, however amusing, since any theoretical position, however sound, admits of easy caricature, which in turn is easily ‘refuted’” (Dennett 1983b: 386). If refutation by caricature is not to be accepted, then proving (or supporting) a thesis by similar means (or almost similar means, by inflating/deflating depending on circumstances, then leaving it to reader to supply imaginations needed to close the wedge opens up by the theory), no matter how well intentioned, unless adequately justified, is likewise indefensible, for what

that phenomenal richness is the inverse of abstraction in art. But this does not seem to make the issue any intuitively clearer nor any more cogent.

²⁸ “[W]hile it is widely accepted that beliefs are propositional attitudes, there is no stable and received interpretation of the technical term” (IS 117; see also IS 118-130). “Propositions: at this time there is no stable, received view of propositions or propositional attitudes on which one can rely. The two chief schools of thought, propositions as sentence-like things and propositions as sets of possible worlds, are strongly incompatible, appealing to quite different intuitions” (IS 203-204). And there is also a third alternative: the set-theoretic paradigm (Oppy 1998: 781-783), which would certainly muddy the water even more. This notwithstanding, Dennett also claims elsewhere that the “most sweeping conclusion I have drawn from this theory of consciousness is that the large and well-regarded literature on propositional attitudes...is largely a disciplinary artifact of no long-term importance whatever, except perhaps as history’s most slowly unwinding unintended *reductio ad absurdum*” (BC 362-363). Though some of these discussions are directed at propositional attitudes, they are no less relevant here.

Dennett has shown is nothing beyond vague pleading of allegiance.²⁹ What we need is perhaps a supporting argument on how this could be the case.³⁰

Dennett in responding to Drestke's critical views on the issue calls upon Grimes's and Resnik's *et al* painstaking research to support his contention that for seeing to occur, there must be some *conceptual uptake* that "'take in' and 'categorize' or 'recognize' or 'discriminate' or 'identify' or ...in some other way judge the presence of something" (GR 513).³¹ However, strictly speaking, apart from reemphasizing the primacy of concept, Dennett has not really addressed Drestke's misgiving. "Are we really being told that it makes no sense to ask whether one can see, thus be aware of, thus be conscious of, objects before being told what they are [before having the respective concepts that is]?" (Drestke 1994: 44).

Dennett's interpretations of Grime's and Resnick's research are not wrong, but partial. We need not in fact be constrained by time pressure characterizing the research. One could in fact study a picture of a scenery, for example, in detail

²⁹ According to Dennett, "beliefs are propositional attitudes" (IS 117). But we see that belief actually serves heuristic function (overlay) in Dennett's theory. "[O]ne recognizes that proposition talk is only a heuristic overlay, a useful – if sometimes treacherous – approximation that is systematically incapable of being rendered precise" (IS 206). In light of this, it appears *maximally* counterintuitive how, by means of the abstractness of something that does not exist, it could provide the ground to account for the *infinite richness* and *fine graininess* of our qualitative experiences.

³⁰ Earlier, in arguing against qualophile on the relation between reactive dispositions and qualia, Dennett lamented. "This is enough to undercut the qualophile's thought experiment, for the goal was to describe a case in which it was obvious that the qualia would be normalized. The assumption that one could *just tell* is question-begging, and without the assumption, there is no argument but just an intuition pump – a story that cajoles you into declaring your gut intuition without giving you a good reason for it" (CE 397, emphasis added). This also seems like a good antithesis to Dennett's claim above, issues which Dennett seems to have glossed over (i.e., by just presuming it is obviously the case), with no real argument.

(long enough so that every detail is seen or taken in hence allowing subjects maximal amount of uptake), yet when asked later to enumerate the differences with other similar picture but with certain elements or parts of the picture altered or omitted, one is likely to fail.³²

If this is so, then inability of research subjects to 'see' or 'identify' cannot be due wholly to the absence of judgement (conceptual uptake), because subjects are given all the time for judgements to take its course, yet they may still fail to tell the difference. Hence, Dennett's interpretation of the results is one-sided. He has not, for instance, allowed for the possibility of failure in seeing as owing to failing in memory nor limitations in concentration or even to inability of subjects to attend to details (see also Noe *et al.* 2000: 99).³³ These hidden parameters become even more crucial given the short duration allowed the subject (in the experiment). Hence, by itself, so long as this disrupting elements (background noises) is not accounted for nor eliminated, the research is inconclusive, and cannot be used to support Dennett's epistemic view of seeing, neither does it discredit the nonepistemic conviction of Dreskte.

³¹ Readers who may wish to have better grasp of Dennett's argument here could consult Grimes (1996) and GR (511-517).

³² I do not have the privilege of carrying out proper experiment but an informal survey seems to confirm this. A good case in point is Crivelli's painting *Annunciation* (Plate 3), cf. Gregory and Gombrich (1973). This example is perhaps slightly overstretched, but this only serves to underscore the point made.

³³ Training and familiarity with subject matter may also make a difference.

8.6 Qualia and Judgement

Commenting on Tye's commentary on Muller-Lyer illusion (MNM 896), Dennett concedes that his theory is vulnerable to Tye's critical reproach if judgement or belief is to be construed strictly in standard sense. However, he retorts that he is employing judgement in a loose sense, i.e., it is to be understood as "the contentful states whose contents the subject does not necessarily endorse (*as one does the contents of one's judgments*)....the standard concept implies the existence of a single canonical 'subject' whose endorsement is essential for judgements, whereas my theory demands that there be judgement-like episodes that compete for something like eventual endorsement" (MNM 922, emphasis added).

Though Dennett has, in a way, answered Tye's criticism, his rejoinder, however, engenders other knotty problems prove detrimental to his own views on phenomenal experiences. Quandaries aside, it *appears* that Dennett's standpoint on qualia aligns better with views of judgement that entail endorsement, rather than the reverse. To develop an account of phenomenal experiences based on pure judgement (standardly construed) is hard, but to base it on an adulterated account of judgement, the way Dennett would have it, is a tall order.³⁴ For, as one may

³⁴ Lets see what a major acclaimed neuroscientist has to say in comparing a qualia-laden perception with one that is relatively poor in qualia. "Compare these two cases, which are similar in that the brain supplies the missing information both times. What's the difference? What does it matter to you, the conscious person, that the yellow doughnut now has qualia in the middle and that the occluded part of your finger does not? The difference is that you cannot change your mind about the yellow in the middle of the doughnut. You can't think, 'Maybe its yellow, but maybe its pink, or maybe its blue.' No, its shouting at you, 'I am yellow,' with an explicit representation of yellowness in its center. In other words, the filled-in yellow is not revocable, not changeable by you.....What is the functional or computational advantage to making qualia irrevocable? One

recall, to Dennett, qualia is essentially a logical construct of judgement.³⁵ And if judgement is not something one necessarily endorses, it is not clear how this could serve as means to ground qualia.

Common experiences of things seem to cry out against Dennett's avowal. Our experience is not generally plagued with equivocalness, but is generally characterized by a definite sense of resoluteness, i.e., we generally believe what we see and hear etc. Lets adopt Dennett's example of Shepard's mental images (CE 285-289, AP 103-105) for illustration. "[I]f you attend to your experience more closely when you say you rotate the image you find it moves in discrete jumps – it flicks through a series of orientations....Isn't it really that these discrete steps are discrete propositional episodes: now it *looks like this*, but if I imagine it turned that much, it would *look like that*They are judgements that fall in an order that would be the proper order of perceptual judgements in a case of watching a real image rotate around a vertical axis" (AP 104). The "look like this" or "like that" constituting rotating images nevertheless conveys an undertone of (steadfast) conviction that defies Dennett's ambivalent or loose construal of judgement. It is quite inconceivable, for instance, if it could "look like this" (say M), but also maybe G, F, J, or K (due to one's dubious attitude in judging), that it

answer is stability. If you constantly changed your mind about qualia, the number of potential outcomes (or 'outputs') would be infinite; nothing would constrain your behavior. At some point you need to say 'this is it' and plant a flag on it, and it's the planting of the flag that we call qualia.....In other words, if I treated perceptions as *beliefs*, I would be blind (as well as paralyzed with indecision). Qualia are irrevocable in order to eliminate hesitation and to confer certainty to decisions (Ramachandran and Blakeslee 1998: 237, 241-242; emphasis added).

³⁵ "Tye sees, correctly, that I base my claim on the belief that 'the central concept of phenomenal experience or seeming can only be understood in terms of concepts pertaining to judgement and belief' (MNM 921).

could result in the generation of impeccable images, no matter *how* and *when* one looks at it. As Dennett himself claims in other context, “if you look out the window and see that a cow is in the garden, you *ipso facto* have a belief that a cow is in the garden” (BC 324), and “[w]hat normally causes people to believe that the sun is shining is the sun’s shining” (BS 180). To be sure, there are situations when one is unsure of one’s perceptions, but generally one is likely to develop some kind of conviction upon subsequent ratification. So, how judgement by means of its waywardness (irresoluteness that is) could have given rise to general sense of resoluteness in experience remains to be explained.

8.7 Conclusion

Though Multiple Drafts model which forms the crux of Dennett’s theory of consciousness is not analyzed, what is examined thus far in the present and preceding chapters nonetheless strike important chord in Dennett’s characterization of the theory. We see that these analyses by themselves are significant enough to knock down important supporting pillar of Dennett’s formulation of consciousness, sufficiently weighty in fact to put Dennett’s theory of consciousness in doubt. Also, with this chapter, we end our investigation of the second half of Dennett’s long-standing quest in the perennial mystery of mind and consciousness.