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Lecture notes on Ned Block, "Concepts of Consciousness," in Chalmers 2002, p 206- 218. Partially drawing on BRENT SILBY "On A Distinction Between Access and Phenomenal Consciousness"

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## INTRO

1. Concept of cness is "mongrel": Connotes different concepts and denotes different phenomena.
2. Problems when we analyze aspects of consciousness using concepts from other aspects.
3. Also (p 214R): just because the overall concept is mongrel (or maybe even incoherent) that doesn't mean that individual aspect concepts (e.g., P-cness) are incoherent. See also 215-16 for ambiguity / cluster / mongrel concepts.
4. Distinctions:
  - a. One chief distinction: *access consciousness* and *phenomenal consciousness*.
  - b. Other cness concepts: self-cness and monitoring cness.

## PHENOMENAL CONSCIOUSNESS

**P-cness** is experiential; it is qualia, "what it is like"-ness, etc. Paradigm = sensations.

1. Intentional content
  - a. Differences in intentional content make a P-cness difference
  - b. Differences in P-cness often make an intentional content difference
  - c. BUT, P-cness properties are not reducible to properties that are
    - i. Cognitive (essentially involving thought)
    - ii. Intentional (representation or aboutness)
    - iii. Functional (can be defined in terms of computer program)
2. Explanatory gap = Chalmers and "hard problem".
  - a. P-cness hard problem
  - b. Versus progress with A-cness, which has two research programs
    - i. LOT (computationalist)
    - ii. Connectionist
3. Other controversies Block notes that he will skip over
  - a. Inverted or absent qualia (absent = zombies)
  - b. Jackson's Mary ("knowledge problem" for Chalmers)
  - c. Nagel, "what it is like"

## ACCESS CONSCIOUSNESS

**A-cness** is cognitive, intentional or functional; tasks involved in cognition, representation and the control of behavior. Paradigm = propositional attitudes.

1. A-cness is "information processing image" of P-cness.
2. A-cness is representations that are "broadcast for free use in reasoning and for direct 'rational' control of action, including reporting."
3. Distinction of A-cness vs P-cness arises from biological vs computational versions of mind
  - a. Computational:

- i. Captured in informational / functional terms.
    - ii. Allows for multiple realizability (Putnam's critique of identity theory).
    - iii. P = A (for functionalist, P and A are high quality access)
  - b. Biological:
    - i. Realization base is where the action is (Searle).
    - ii. P can diverge from A (see below)
- 4. Three big differences between P and A cness
  - a. P cness is phenomenal while A cness is representational
    - i. But many P contents are also representational
    - ii. P conscious content is totality of experiential properties
    - iii. Intentionality:
      - 1. A cness is always transitive / about / intentional
      - 2. P cness are not always transitive / intentional
  - b. A cness is functional / system relative; P cness is not functional
  - c. P-cness has types (e.g., pain is a type) but A-cness tokens can fail to be accessible at other times.

### **A-CNESS without P-CNESS**

- 5. Blindsight: blind region in visual field, so no objects, but can "guess" location, motion and direction of stimuli.
  - a. So this is absent P-cness AND absent A-cness as content of blind region is not available for the *rational control of action*.
  - b. Blindsight patients must be prompted by an experimenter before they will 'take a guess'.
  - c. But imagine a *super-blindsighter* who can guess *when* to guess (= limited, partial zombie).
    - i. Even w/o visual objects, she can spontaneously guess. Information about her blind field just springs into her thoughts.
    - ii. A super-blindsighter would be A-conscious but not P-conscious.
  - d. A super-duper-blindsighter = fully functioning zombie
- 6. Three kinds of access
  - a. high quality access: super-duper-blindsighter and usually us normal
  - b. medium quality access: super-blindsighter and sometimes us (e.g. peripheral vision)
  - c. poor access: actual blindsighters

### **P-CNESS without A-CNESS**

- 7. Dual-stream visual system:
  - a. Ventral (P-cness: object recognition and classification)
  - b. Dorsal (A-cness: location and motion).
- 8. In blindsight: damage to ventral,
  - a. so this is possibility of A-cness w/o P-cness.
  - b. If you had damage to dorsal system, this would be P-cness w/o A-cness, but it would be hard to tell, since lack of A-cness means content is not poised for control of behavior such as verbal report "I see something red."
- 9. Example with hearing. You can suddenly notice something that had been there all along; e.g. ticking clock, humming computer, etc.
  - a. You were aware but not consciously aware.
  - b. You had P-cness, but not A-cness, as info about clock was not poised for direct rational control of action until you notice it (and decide to check what time it was).

- c. You become A-conscious when you notice it / pay attention to it / when it is "broadcast for use in rational control of action and speech." (lots of discussion of this in the literature; Prinz, *Conscious Brain*, is a recent addition.)
- d. Note that this is not necessarily HOT (higher order thought, when you represent to yourself that [have the belief that] you are now and always were hearing the noise).
- e. Now if you think back, you could say you were aware all along, but you need A-ness to shift attention to clock sound and allow you to report your retrospective awareness of its sound. [WE WILL DEAL WITH THIS AS PRE-REFLECTIVE AWARENESS IN PHENOMENOLOGY TRADITION.]

### OTHER REMARKS

- 10. A-ness and P-ness usually occur together but not always. When they diverge you can talk of unconscious states.
  - a. P w/o A = Freudian uncness
  - b. A w/o P = zombie is unconscious
- 11. Prosopagnosia (inability to distinguish faces): disorder of A, not P-ness

### Chalmers on Block's Distinction (from Silby's paper)

- 12. The A vs P distinction allows cognitivist explanations for behavior w/o P-ness.
- 13. But what purpose does P-ness actually serve if you can have A-ness w/o P-ness?
  - a. Chalmers believes A- and P-ness *always* occur together.
  - b. Chalmers defines A-ness as content available for use in directing behaviors (doesn't have to be "poised for direct rational control" as with Block).
  - c. So info (ticking clock) was *available* but not *accessed*. So there is both P- and A-ness.
- 14. But then problem of superfluous P-ness, since only A-ness is needed to control behavior. This opens the conceptual door for zombies.
  - a. Chalmers doesn't mind this though, as he's an non-physicalist.
  - b. Hard Problem: can't functionally / physically account for (i.e., "reduce") P-ness.
  - c. But then of course we have the *epiphenomenalist* issue w/r/t mental causation.

### SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

- 15. Possession of concept of self and ability to use it in thinking about yourself.
  - a. Recognition of self in mirror.
  - b. But even w/o passing mirror test, no reason to think there is no P-ness in dogs and monkeys.
- 16. P-cns states often have a "me" quality to them: "I'm the one with this quality experience." AGAIN, THIS WILL BE BIG ISSUE FOR PHENOMENOLOGISTS.

### MONITORING CONSCIOUSNESS

- 17. Three types of monitoring:
  - a. Internal perception
  - b. Information processing / internal scanning
  - c. Meta-cognitive / HOT: cns states are accompanied by thought that you are in that state
- 18. Block does not want to say P-ness is just a form of monitoring cness, because that prepares way to eliminate P-ness.

19. HOT (Higher Order Thought): according to Rosenthal 1997, S is reflexively conscious state when it is accompanied by non-inferentially and non-observationally derived thought "that I am in S."
- a. Block objects to R's seeing HOT as a theory of P-ness.
    - i. Conceptually possible counter-examples.
      1. P-ness pains w/o HOT in infants, dogs, etc.
      2. I could know I have Freudian uncns states w/o P-ness of them.
    - ii. R has ad hoc features in his theory.
  - b. Block's revision: S is MC state = S is phenomenally presented in thought about S