

Review of: "Hard problems in the philosophy of mind"

Rajarethinam Emmanuel¹

¹ Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS)

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The article does an excellent job of refuting physicalism. However, it ends up centralizing an individual belief system of an eternal substance, called God having the power to create multiple individual substances who at present have a temporary and not-so-important link with a body. Evolution has been accepted only to the point of bringing out an efficient body/brain physiology that somehow finds some mysterious connections and mappings with the events of the mind.

Now the real questions are the following: While the individual belief system presented through the article might appear logical, coherent and holistic in explaining the physical, the biological and the mental phenomena from the perspective of the individual concerned, will it also appear reasonable, natural and holistic in the minds of other individuals of our times? Would they not be perturbed by an artificial linkage of natural science with the concepts and explanations put forward by a specific religious tradition? Would it not appear unpleasant and unsatisfactory when the article brings in a kind of mysterious connection between brain and mental processes?

While I am deeply impressed by the refutation of physicalism, functionalism, incompatibilism, supervenience, epiphenomenalism and all other theories of mind put forward in our times, as emphatically brought out through the article, I would suggest that there is still a possibility of offering a non-tilted, unbroken explanation starting right from physical and biological developments of the past 13.8 billion years.

Any attempt to resolve the so-called hard problem must begin with stating clearly both the essential connection and the essential difference between the physical and the mental phenomena. 1) The findings of neuroscience and even the most common observation of inputs arising from the physical world resulting in mental experience together suggest an obvious matter of essential connection between the two realm. It's naïve to argue that the two aren't connected. The minute details of mappings and connections may be left to the domain of neuroscience itself. 2) The essential difference however arises only when the habitual unconscious learning and behaviour turned into a conscious experience of senses, emotions, language, reasoning etc. And that difference boils down to two important points again: 1) The conscious experience escapes certain physical dimensions such as mass, momentum and charge that may be captured through physical observations with or without the aid of instruments. This doesn't imply all physical characteristics have been lost. Conscious experience continues to retain physical connections such as some sort of association with the flow of time and of course the proportionate impact and causal connection of physical events that precede the conscious experience. 2) In spite of such partial connection and partial disconnection, the most significant difference lies in the fact that the conscious experience is accessible to the individual and not to anyone else in precisely the same way.

Now such essential connections and differences are applicable for each and every momentary conscious experience starting with the sensual experience.

Supported by a complex electro-chemical function of the brain, the habitual generation of the memory of sensual experiences, part of which were later turned into language sensations together managed to provide the other different conscious experiences such as thinking, reasoning and imagining. Concepts of freedom, individuality, ethics, morals, permanent eternal substance can also be traced back to the association of momentary sense experiences and the intuitive conscious experiences that accompany as a fall out.

What we call inexplicable intuition can also be explained in terms of the generation of the different associations of neural firing itself. The memory of the patterns in the external world gradually created the need to look for the similar, the opposite, the present, the absent, the past and the future along with the simple conscious experience and their translation in simple statements of language. Just like there's an unconscious habitual co-ordination of bodily movements controlled by the brain, the habitual linkages of conscious memories, be it pure observation or making of statement with the habitual possibilities to look for the opposite, the absent, the variant etc produced what we call thinking and reasoning. Hume spoke about the ability to intuit a missing shade of blue as a kind of only exception in explaining the composite ideas of the mind in terms of simple ideas. Contributions to the analysis of the sensations by Ernst Mach would also serve as a starting point of reference. Developing on such introspective analysis, while beautifully combining the mappings discovered by neuroscience, one can indeed make sense of how all other macroscopic concepts of consciousness evolved over the time. The free will, self or any other so-called metaphysical concept is nothing but the generation of selective and consistent memories made possible through the brain system.

It's the habitual selection of a string of memories with possibilities of associated intuitions that misled Descartes and others to think of mind as an active, independent agent of its own. We have been duped to think that we are acting on our own. However, mind is a constantly evolving entity. It can be trained to learn and repeatedly consider the extent of intimate causal connections each and every thought process must necessarily have with the brain functions. Just as it requires certain amount of learning and imagination from our part to conceptualize the continually expanding universe in which planet earth is but a pale blue dot.

Consciousness is not an indivisible thing. It is divisible by thousands of specific memories and the new intuitions which automatically arise due to habitual learnings of patterns discovered in the external world.

The advantage of this bottom-up explanation is obvious. Mysterious interventions need not be brought in arbitrarily here and there. By this we don't imply there's no mystery to the world. The mystery is about everything. Physicalism is attempting to do away with mystery, a serious issue your article brilliantly opposes. However rather than retreating back to the conventional belief system that has already run into conflict with the discoveries of science, it's possible to offer a holistic explanation that is consistent with science.

The entire physical set of forces, their co-ordination, the biological choices leading to greater efficiency and the evolution of higher species and the entire build-up of memory system, everything together is an unfathomable huge mystery. The

unlimited future possibilities will also unfold additional wonders of new developments especially from the deep sense of mystery acknowledged and realized by the individuals in their secretive conscious experience.

This is an alternate way of explaining the mental phenomena right from the base of the physical and the biological expansions without taking away any honour, mystery and potential of the macroscopic reality called consciousness. It's macroscopic and composite; not a simple substance.