

Peer Review

Review of: "Reporting and Subjectivity Traps: A Brief Opinion Article on Consciousness as Belief"

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Thank you for sharing this thoughtful piece. I appreciate the way you frame the “reporting and subjectivity traps” and your engagement with Dennett’s skepticism regarding the reliability of introspection and the self-model.

One point that stood out in your paper is the absence of discussion about **awareness**. Most literature tends to treat awareness as synonymous with consciousness, or as a subset of it. In contrast, some consciousness theories such as Triology Theory of Consciousness (TTC) draw a clear distinction between these two cognitive phenomena.

From my perspective, the conceptual difficulty you identify, namely, the conflation between *experienced consciousness* and *belief about consciousness*—arises precisely because there is no clear boundary drawn between **awareness** and **consciousness** themselves.

In TTC, *awareness* is defined as the **subjective experience** of sensory, visual, or memory-related phenomena—when sensation turns into perception, knowledge into knowing, memory into remembering, and thought into thinking. Yet none of these alone constitute *consciousness*. What is required is *awareness-based choice selection or intention*, which together provide the sense of agency that gives rise to consciousness.

Dennett’s perspective, in my view, overlooks this distinction. His argument does not merely claim that awareness is a false interpretation of reality or an illusion—he effectively **denies the existence of subjectivity altogether**. By adding layers of interpretation to experience, he assumes that subjectivity is never needed, while he simply overlooks the need for a *subjective experience of that interpretation*.

Subjectivity, therefore, is not a trap but a **reality** we must strive to understand rather than escape or brush under the rug. It may indeed be beyond computation, as I have proposed in the *Quantum Trilogy Theory of Consciousness*, where subjectivity arises from the interaction between the brain and a **quantum field of awareness**. Recognizing this distinction helps avoid the very conceptual trap Dennett could not escape—his attempt to dissolve the hard problem of consciousness by claiming that what we sense is merely a brain-generated illusion that serves survival.

In my interpretation, **awareness is selfless, momentary, and experiential**—as when we are aware of a dream during sleep while not being conscious. **Consciousness**, by contrast, emerges when *intention* and a *sense of agency* are added in the *post-transformation stage of awareness*, engaging processes such as attention, memorization, comparison, and judgment.

Without recognizing this distinction, analyses of consciousness tend to mix **the subjective presence of experience (awareness)** with **the cognitive interpretation of that experience (consciousness)**. This blurring reinforces the “illusion problem” Dennett describes, but the illusion may not stem from experience itself being unreal—it may stem from our attempt to model *consciousness* solely through brain-based interpretations, while denying the reality of *subjectivity*.

From this standpoint, what you call “consciousness as belief” again falls into the same fallacy—failing to identify what *subjective entity* holds that belief.

Clarifying this distinction might help disentangle what is truly **illusory** (the cognitive narrative about experience) from what is **fundamentally real** (the experiential presence itself). It also opens a pathway to study *awareness* independently of self-report, possibly avoiding the very traps you have insightfully described.

Overall, your piece raises important questions about the epistemology of consciousness research. I think adding a **terminological or structural distinction between awareness, consciousness, and self-reflection** could make your argument even stronger and more precise.

Regards,

Ashkan Farhadi

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.