Existential and Behavioral Senses of the Meta Problem

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Abstract

The meta problem can be seen in two different ways: a problem considering the existence of the hard problem, and a problem considering the behaviors related to expressing reports about the hard problem. The existential way of seeing is equivalent to the first approximation of the meta problem while Chalmers introduces it, and the behavioral way of seeing is equivalent to the second approximation. We are going to argue that these are two different problems and there are different solutions to each of them. In the existential sense, one remains silent on the nature of the meta problem processes, while in the behavioral sense, one restricts the nature of those processes to behavior. This difference is so deep that we can replace the meta problem with two distinct problems:

the existential meta problem, and the behavioral meta problem. The subject of the existential problem is purely the existence of the hard problem of consciousness regardless of any premise on how such a problem comes into existence. While with behavioral problem, we presuppose that the hard problem comes into existence only by the means of behavior, and its subjects would be certain cognitive functions. The behavioral problem has strong connections to materialism, and its solution seems completely achievable through fulfillment of the meta problem

programme. A solution only requires explaining how neural mechanisms regulate the formation of problem

reports. On the other hand, the existential problem would be in favor of one without materialist commitments.

The neutrality of the existential problem allows one to apply her metaphysical premises about the nature of processes responsible for bringing

the hard problem into existence. It results in shaping other versions of the meta problem considering one's metaphysical position -e.g. idealist meta problem, and interactionist meta problem.
Subsequent solutions to each of those problems might have quite different appearance than what the meta problem programme follows. Once the behavioral problem is solved, the existential problem remains intact for non-materialist metaphysical positions.

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