



# Revelation and the intuition of dualism

Michelle Liu<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In recent literature on the metaphysics of consciousness, and in particular on the prospects of physicalism, there are two interesting strands of discussion. One strand concerns the so-called ‘thesis of revelation’, the claim that the essences of phenomenal properties are revealed in experience. The other strand concerns the intuition of dualism, the intuition that consciousness is nonphysical. With a particular focus on the former, this paper advances two main arguments. First, it argues that the thesis of revelation is intuitive; it is part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience. Second, it brings the two strands of discussion together and puts forward a rational explanation of the intuition of dualism in terms of the intuitiveness of the thesis of revelation.

**Keywords** Revelation · Phenomenal properties · Intuition of dualism · Physicalism

## 1 Introduction

In recent literature on the metaphysics of consciousness, and in particular on the prospects of physicalism, there are two interesting strands of discussion. In the first strand, there is increasing interest in the thesis of revelation, the claim that the essences of phenomenal properties are revealed in phenomenal experience (Damjanovic, 2012; Goff, 2015, 2017; Lewis, 1995; Liu, 2019, 2020; Majeed, 2017; Nida-Rümelin, 2007; Stoljar, 2006, 2009, 2018; Trogdon, 2017). It is often thought that revelation is *prima facie* plausible but incompatible with physicalists’ claim that phenomenal properties are physical (e.g. Chalmers, 2016, 2018; Goff, 2015, 2017; Lewis, 1995; Liu, 2019, 2020). A number of anti-physicalists have indeed appealed to revelation to argue against physicalism (e.g. Horgan and Tienson, 2001; Nida-Rümelin, 2007; Goff, 2015, 2017).

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✉ Michelle Liu  
michelle.yb.liu@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK

In the second strand, there is debate about the intuition of dualism, a persistent and perhaps widespread belief or disposition to believe that consciousness is non-physical (Bogardus, 2013; Chalmers, 2018; Fiala et al., 2011; Papineau, 2002, 2008, 2011, 2020; Sundström, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Physicalists like David Papineau (2002, 2008, 2011, 2020) argue that resistance to physicalism is due entirely to this intuition, which, they maintain, can be explained in a way that is compatible with physicalism and thus does not indicate its falsity. However, leading physicalist proposals aimed at explaining away the intuition of dualism are all problematic (see Sundström, 2008; Bogardus, 2013; Chalmers, 2018).

This paper puts a particular focus on the first strand of discussion, but also connects the two strands by showing that these debates may be linked in an interesting way. I aim to do two things. First, I put forward an argument for the intuitiveness of revelation. Appealing to linguistic intuitions, I argue that the thesis of revelation, as understood in this paper, is intuitive in the sense of being part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience. While many have acknowledged the intuitiveness of revelation, including avowed physicalists (Braddon-Mitchell, 2007; Hill, 2014; Lewis, 1995; McLaughlin, 2003; Papineau, 2020), this issue remains contentious. Notably, Daniel Stoljar (2006, 2009) has argued extensively that there is no good reason to think that revelation is intuitive. My argument thus offers a new consideration against Stoljar and in favour of the intuitiveness of revelation.

The second aim of this paper is to apply the intuitiveness of revelation to the discussion of the intuition of dualism. I argue that the thesis of revelation is a crucial rationale behind our intuition of dualism. It is plausible that we judge or are disposed to judge that consciousness is nonphysical because we draw on our implicit understanding of revelation as well as an implicit appreciation of an entailment from revelation to the falsity of the claim that phenomenal properties are physical. The paper thus offers a diagnosis of a crucial source of our intuitive and persistent resistance to physicalism.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 clarifies the thesis of revelation. Section 3 spells out how revelation thus understood naturally leads one to the conclusion that phenomenal properties are nonphysical. In Sect. 4, I turn to the intuitiveness of revelation and argue by inference to the best explanation that revelation is part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience. Section 5 clarifies the intuition of dualism and spells out how the intuition of dualism may plausibly be traced to our implicit understanding of revelation. Section 6 concludes the paper by tying the discussion to broader considerations regarding the prospects of physicalism.

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<sup>1</sup> A note on terminology: while I have used the term ‘intuition of dualism’ here, others have used different terminologies to refer to the same idea, e.g. ‘dualist intuitions’ in Chalmers (2018), ‘the intuition of distinctness’ in Papineau (2002, 2008, 2011, 2020).

## 2 Revelation

In the literature, there have been many attempts at formulating the idea of ‘revelation’. Sometimes, it is formulated with respect to *phenomenal concepts* (e.g. Goff, 2017; Nida-Rümelin, 2007; Trogdon, 2017). Sometimes, it is formulated with respect to *introspection* (e.g. Majeed, 2017; Chalmers, 2018). Some formulations make no reference to these philosophical notions (e.g. Lewis, 1995; Liu, 2019, 2020; Stoljar, 2009). Fundamentally, the thesis of revelation makes a claim about *what* we know or are in a position to know by having a phenomenal experience with a particular phenomenal property. Stoljar (2009: p. 115), for instance, puts the basic idea of revelation as follows:

According to the thesis of revelation, having an experience puts you in a remarkable epistemic position: you know or are in a position to know the essence or nature of the experience.

Stoljar uses ‘essence’ and ‘nature’ interchangeably and uses the term ‘experience’ to refer to a *phenomenal property* (see also Stoljar, 2006: p. 20). Consider the phenomenal property *phenomenal red*, the what-it-is-likeness of undergoing an experience of seeing something red. According to the thesis of revelation, in having a phenomenal red experience, one knows or is in a position to know the *essence* of the phenomenal character *phenomenal red*. In the rest of this section, I shall attempt to further clarify the thesis of revelation.

Stoljar (2009) notes the distinction between *knowing* and *being in a position to know*. One might think that revelation is less controversial if formulated with the latter notion. For instance, it seems plausible that animals have *phenomenal red* experiences, but it doesn’t seem plausible that they are cognitively sophisticated enough to know the essence of *phenomenal red*. Formulating revelation in terms of the notion of ‘in a position to know’ potentially avoids this problem. But as Stoljar (2009: p. 109) notes, it may be difficult to unpack precisely what is involved in being in a position to know in this case. In response, it is worth pointing out that while there may be, in addition to having the relevant experience, some conditions that need to be met for knowing the essence of a phenomenal property, the thesis of revelation is supposed to capture the idea that we humans are often in the right circumstances to actually know the essences of phenomenal properties. One might think that being in a position to know here requires one to possess certain capacities or characteristics, such as being able to attend to the experience, not being distracted, and having the kind of cognitive architecture that enables a subject to form certain thoughts about the phenomenal properties of their experiences. Once these conditions are met, actually coming to know the essences of phenomenal properties is not particularly demanding.

Let’s now consider what it is to know the essence of a property in general. Following Fine (1994, 1995), I here adopt the definitional account of essence and

take the *essence* of something to be that which makes the thing the thing it is. Fine (1995) also calls essence understood in this sense ‘immediate constitutive essence’, i.e. what the thing is *in its most core respects*. Knowing the essence of a property—any property—in this sense can be intuitively understood as knowing some proposition that *defines* the property. Consider the property *being a sister*. The proposition ‘Being a sister is being a female sibling’ is a definition of the property *being a sister*—it describes accurately what it is to be a sister.<sup>2</sup> In knowing such a proposition, one knows the essence of *being sister*—what *being sister* is in its most core respects. The predicate ‘being a female sibling’, in this case, *captures* the essence of *being a sister*.

There is a distinction between a predicate’s only *referring* to the essence of something, and a predicate’s in addition *capturing* the essence of something as understood here. An example brings out the distinction. Consider the following sentences:

- (a) Being triangular is having a three-sided closed shape.
- (b) Being triangular is having whatever shape makes something a triangle.

(a) is a *definition* of the property *triangularity*. The predicate ‘having a three-sided closed shape’ in this case ‘captures’ the essence of *triangularity* in the sense of revealing the essence of the designated property including its internal structure. In contrast, (b) doesn’t seem to provide a definition of *triangularity*. The predicate ‘having whatever shape makes something a triangle’ thus does not *capture*, but merely *refers* to the essence of *triangularity*. So, knowing the essence of a property P in general can be intuitively understood as knowing a proposition S in the form of ‘P is X’, where the predicate ‘X’ *captures* the essence of P, that is, where the proposition S *defines* P. Knowing the essence of a phenomenal property Q is then knowing some proposition ‘Q is X’, where the predicate ‘X’ *captures* the essence of Q, that is, where the proposition *defines* Q.

Suppose the thesis of revelation is true, that experience puts us in a position to know the essence of some Q. What then would the essence-capturing proposition ‘Q is X’ look like? I think here it is tempting to think that such a proposition may be hard to put into words. Imagine staring at a cloudless blue sky. Your token experience has the phenomenal property of *phenomenal blue*—the what-it-is-likeness of undergoing an experience of seeing something blue. In articulating what it is like to have a phenomenal blue experience, it might seem that all you are able to say is that ‘Phenomenal blue is *this*’, where the demonstrative, which refers to the what-it-is-likeness of *phenomenal blue*, may be difficult or impossible to unpack in further words. As an advocate of revelation would say, the demonstrative is merely a placeholder for the rich knowledge of *phenomenal blue* you have but are unable to put into words. With this knowledge, you might then come to possess a concept of the phenomenal property *phenomenal blue*, be able to remember that property,

<sup>2</sup> In comparison, the proposition ‘Being a sister is being a sibling’ does not define *being a sister*. It only describes part of the essence of *being a sister*.

imagine that property, recognise further instances of that property, and so on (see Lewis, 1995).

Given the aforesaid, I shall formulate the thesis of revelation as the following:

- (R) By having an experience-token with phenomenal property Q, one knows or is in a position to know a truth, namely, ‘Q is X’, where the predicate ‘X’ captures the essence of Q, although it may be hard to put into words.

Formulated as (R), revelation can be understood as consisting of two claims. First, an experience with quale Q affords us certain knowledge about Q, namely, ‘Q is X’ (or ‘Q is *this*’) where the proposition describes what it is like to undergo an experience with Q. Second, such knowledge is about the *essence* of Q. ‘Q is X’ is a truth that *defines* Q—it states what Q is in its most core respects. The predicate ‘X’ in this case is supposed to *capture*, rather than just *refer* to, the essence of Q.

### 3 Revelation and physicalism

Physicalists who acknowledge that experiences have phenomenal properties and take phenomenal properties to have physical essences would agree with the first component of the thesis of revelation as set out above. They would say that in having an experience with quale Q, one is in a position to know that ‘Q is X’ which describes the what-it-is-likeness of Q. But many would not accept the second component of revelation, that this predicate ‘X’ captures the essence of Q understood in the above sense (e.g. Balog, 2012; McLaughlin, 2001, 2003; Papineau, 2007). Indeed, I take it that a posteriori physicalists would say that there can be two conceptions—phenomenal and physical—of the same phenomenal property, which is physical in its essence; but many of them would not say that both conceptions reveal the essence of the phenomenal property they refer to. For these physicalists, as McLaughlin (2001: p. 34) notes, phenomenal concepts ‘do not conceptually reveal anything about the essential nature of phenomenal properties: they simply name or demonstrate them’ (see also Papineau, 2007; Balog, 2012).

The reasoning behind the rejection of revelation by these physicalists seems to be the following. For such physicalists, phenomenal properties have purely physical essences.<sup>3</sup> So, what *defines* a phenomenal property is naturally and plausibly only a physical truth, e.g. ‘the painfulness of pain is being an event of C-fibres firing’ where the physical predicate ‘being an event of C-fibres firing’ *captures* the essence of the *painfulness of pain*.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it doesn’t seem to be particularly plausible to insist that there could be two radically different propositions—a physical and a phenomenal one—both of which *define* Q, that is, *accurately describe* what Q is in its most core respects. The burden is on those who reject

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the paper, ‘physical’ is understood broadly to include functional properties.

<sup>4</sup> Note that ‘C-fibres firing’ is merely a placeholder for whatever physical properties, including functional properties, turn out to be the essence of the painfulness of pain, assuming physicalism is true.

this claim to show how there could be two conceptually independent definitions capturing the immediate constitutive essence of a phenomenal property, including revealing its internal structure. Indeed, the phenomenal truth ‘The painfulness of pain is *this*’ suggests that such a phenomenal property has no internal structure (see Lewis, 1995 on the simplicity of qualia); whereas the corresponding physical truth ‘the painfulness of pain is being an event of C-fibres firing’ reveals that the property has a complex internal structure. It becomes puzzling how one essence-defining truth can reveal that phenomenal properties are structurally simple and the other structurally complex. As a result, for a physicalist, the truth ‘Q is X’, which we know through having an experience with Q but mentions no physical predicates, cannot be something that also *defines* Q, and ‘X’ at best merely *refers* to the essence of Q.

Given the formulation of (R), we can see how one might arrive at the conclusion that phenomenal properties are not physical properties from the thesis of revelation. Consider the following reasoning:

- (1) By having an experience-token with phenomenal property Q, S knows or is in a position to know that ‘Q is X’, where the predicate ‘X’ captures the essence of Q.
- (2) If phenomenal properties are physical, then phenomenal properties have physical essences.
- (3) If phenomenal properties have physical essences, then by having an experience-token with phenomenal property Q, S knows or is in a position to know that ‘Q is X’, where ‘X’ is a physical predicate which captures the essence of Q.
- (4) It is not true that by having an experience-token with phenomenal property Q, S knows or is in a position to know that ‘Q is X’, where ‘X’ is a physical predicate which captures the essence of Q.
- (5) Phenomenal properties are not physical.

(1) is the thesis of revelation. (2) seems intuitive. (3) is supposed to follow from (1) and (2) with the implicit assumption that there could not be two radically different essence-defining truths ‘Q is X’—one phenomenal and one physical—where the predicate ‘X’ captures or reveals what Q is in its most core respects. (4) seems true—an essence-defining physical truth ‘Q is X’, where ‘X’ is a physical predicate, is unlikely to be known merely by having an experience with Q. Conclusion (5) then follows from (2), (3) and (4). Given physicalists standardly subscribe to the claim that phenomenal properties are physical properties, (5) entails the denial of physicalism. The aforesaid argument is nicely summarised in a passage from Lewis (1995: p. 142):

If, for instance, Q is essentially the physical property of being an event of C-firing, and if I identify the qualia of my experience in the appropriate ‘demanding and literal’ sense, I come to know that what is going on in me is an event of C-firing. Contrapositively: if I identify the quale of my experience in the appropriate sense, and yet know nothing of the firing of my

neurons, then the quale of my experience cannot have been essentially the property of being an event of C-firing.

With the phrase ‘identify the quale in the appropriate “demanding and literal” sense’, Lewis refers to the thesis of revelation. After spelling out the incompatibility between revelation and physicalism, Lewis goes on to say that physicalists must reject revelation.

It is worth pointing out that in the literature, revelation has been taken to have different implications. For instance, not everyone agrees that revelation is incompatible with physicalism (Damjanovic, 2012; Trogdon, 2017). It is not always clear whether revelation also rules out Russellian monism (Chalmers, 2016; Goff, 2017; Stoljar, 2018). Some of these issues stem from a lack of clarity concerning the thesis of revelation. In Sect. 2, I have proposed some clarifications. I considered how knowing the essence of a property in general may intuitively be understood, and what knowing the essence of a phenomenal property in particular may amount to. This allowed us to formulate the thesis of revelation, as (R). We then saw how revelation thus understood may intuitively lead to the falsity of the claim that phenomenal properties are physical. In the next section, I shall argue that the thesis of revelation thus understood is part of our implicit conception of experience.

#### 4 Revelation, intuitiveness, and the implicit conception of experience

Before turning to my argument, it is worth noting that revelation has often been thought of as intuitive, especially by many physicalists who endorse the incompatibility of revelation and physicalism. Lewis (1995: p. 142) claims that revelation ‘seems obvious’. Papineau (2020: p. 32) thinks that revelation ‘is a highly intuitive idea’. According to McLaughlin (2003: p. 99), ‘[t]he powerful intuitive appeal of the doctrine of Revelation for what it’s like to see colours—for the phenomenal characters of colour experiences—seems ... undeniable’. According to Hill (2014: pp. 199–200), ‘we are inclined to think that experiential awareness provides us with full access to the essential nature of qualia. Our grasp of them is not perspectival or limited in any way’.

A claim may be said to be intuitive in different senses. Among those who take revelation to be intuitive, many explicitly associate its intuitiveness with its being part of the ordinary, implicit conception of experience. For instance, according to Lewis (1995: p. 142), revelation ‘seems obvious because it is built into folk psychology’. For Braddon-Mitchell (2007: p. 287), revelation is intuitive because ‘[i]t is a fairly deep feature of our conception of consciousness (or at least of qualia)’.

However, contra these philosophers, Stoljar (2006, 2009) has argued extensively that there is no good reason to think that revelation is intuitive. I side with Lewis and Braddon-Mitchell that revelation has a folk-theoretical status and for this reason it is intuitive. Nevertheless, I think we can do better than merely asserting the folk-theoretical status of revelation. In the following, I shall put forward a linguistic argument in support of the claim that the thesis of revelation is part of our ordinary, implicit conception

of experience. This result will then allow us to identify the thesis of revelation as a rationale for the intuition of dualism in Sect. 5. Before delving into my argument, I shall make a few preliminary clarifications.

#### 4.1 Some clarifications

Let me first clarify the notion of *implicit conception*. The notion used here is largely borrowed from Christopher Peacocke (2008). Peacocke (2008: p. 113) defines an implicit conception as ‘a state of tacit knowledge required for possession of a given concept’. For Peacocke (2008: p. 122), ‘the attribution of a content to an implicit conception is fundamentally answerable to its role in explaining the thinker’s ordinary applications of the concept in question’.

I think we can legitimately extend Peacocke’s definition of implicit conceptions to encompass states of tacit knowledge that go beyond what is strictly required for concept possession. An implicit conception of T is what figures fundamentally in explaining a subject’s application of the concept of T and judgements concerning T. So, an implicit conception of experience plays a crucial role in explaining our judgements about conscious experience. Such a conception of experience is possessed by ordinary thinkers and is also shared by philosophers. I shall argue in the next few subsections, based on intuitive judgments we make regarding certain linguistic utterances, that we should—as Peacocke would put it—attribute the content of the thesis of revelation to our implicit conception of experience.

Now, one might think that revelation cannot possibly be part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience because it features the notion of *essence*, which some might think is technical and not pre-theoretically clear (e.g. Stoljar, 2009: p. 127). I think this worry is unwarranted. The notion of essence which we have been using here, namely, ‘that which makes something the thing it is’, is that of the Aristotelian/Lockean/Finean *real definitional* account of essence. Fine (1994) takes the notion of essence to be akin to that of *definition*, and to be such that we can all easily get a grip on it by considering examples. Of course, this does not mean that we all know clearly what the essence of any given thing is. There is a distinction to be drawn between having an adequate understanding of the notion of essence itself, and being able to answer the question—*What* makes a given thing the thing it is? One might very well have the former understanding without being able to answer the latter question. To determine what counts as the essence of a thing is often an a posteriori enquiry.

Furthermore, studies in developmental psychology have shown that humans from a young age have the tendency to represent things and categories of things to have hidden essences (e.g. Gelman, 2003; Keil, 1989; Medin & Ortony, 1989). This is known as ‘psychological essentialism’. The concept of essence that these psychologists invoke is precisely the Aristotelian/Lockean/Finean notion of *real essence* (see Gelman, 2003: p. 3). Psychological essentialism thus suggests that the concept of essence is a concept that the folk have and frequently utilise.

Throughout the paper, I shall also take it for granted, as it is usually assumed in the literature, that the notion of *phenomenal property* or *phenomenal type* is a folk



psychological concept, or at least a concept that ordinary people can easily grasp. Despite resistance to this view (Sytsma & Machery, 2010), I think there are good reasons for holding it. For a start, ordinary English words like ‘experience’, ‘feeling’, used in a certain sense, adequately capture the philosophers’ conception of *phenomenal experience* or *qualia*. As linguist Anna Wierzbicka (2010: p. 39) notes, the word ‘experience’, for instance, took on a new reference to subjective aspects of mental episodes in the eighteenth century, possibly due to the influence of British empiricism. Examples of conscious experiences frequently used by philosophers such as ‘seeing red’, ‘hearing sounds’, ‘feeling anxious’, etc. are plausibly experiences in this post-17th-century meaning of the word. Stoljar (2006: p. 20) also notes that the word ‘experience’ in ordinary English is often used to simply mean ‘phenomenal character’ or ‘phenomenal property’. He writes, ‘We in fact *do* say that the experience of this event is identical to the experience of that event and mean by this only that the phenomenal character of this is identical to the phenomenal character of that.’ So, the question under consideration here is whether the thesis of revelation is part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience and its phenomenal properties. To answer this question, let’s now turn to my argument.

## 4.2 Argument

Consider the following sentences:

- (1) I know what gold looks like, but I don’t know what gold really is.\
- (2) I know what an itch feels like, but I don’t know what the feeling of an itch really is.

(1) sounds perfectly fine, whereas (2) sounds very odd, at least to many English speakers.<sup>5</sup>

Consider also the following two sentences.

- (3) You have all seen diamonds, but do you know what a diamond really is?

<sup>5</sup> 121 responses were gathered from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants, who were fluent English speakers, were first presented with a vignette which explained the task and contained the following example:

A triangle is, by definition, a closed shape with three sides. Consider the sentence ‘I know that a triangle is a closed shape with three sides, but I don’t know what a triangle really is.’ Although it makes no grammatical errors, this sentence sounds very strange, because if one knows that a triangle is a closed shape with three sides, then one knows what a triangle really is.

After passing trial questions about the vignette, participants were then asked to judge a list of sentences, including (1) and (2), on a scale from 1 to 7, where ‘1’ is ‘This sentence is not strange’ and ‘7’ is ‘This sentence is very strange’. The average ratings for (1) and (2) were 2.98 (SD=1.79) and 5.69 (SD=1.64). 70.3% gave (2) a score of 5 or above with 40.5% responding ‘7’. In contrast, only 26.6% gave (1) a score of 5 or above and 57.9% gave it a score of 3 or below.

- (4) You have all experienced toothaches, but do you know what the feeling of a toothache really is?

As with the first pair, to many (3) sounds fine whereas (4) sounds odd.<sup>6</sup>

In this section, I shall argue that our linguistic intuitions elicited by these sentences, in particular by (2) and (4), support the claim that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience. It is worth noting that (2) concerns whether one can have knowledge regarding how a sensation feels without knowing what the feeling of that sensation really is; whereas (4) concerns whether one can have experienced a sensation without knowing what the feeling of the sensation really is. Intuitively, someone who has had a particular kind of sensation usually knows what that sensation feels like, and someone who knows what a sensation feels like has usually had that kind of sensation. So, if one finds one of the sentences odd, it is likely that one would also find the other one odd. For simplicity, I will only focus on (2) and the first pair of sentences.

I will first argue that there is a particular kind of reading of (2), which I call ‘the essential reading’, and this reading allows (2) to be rendered odd.<sup>7</sup> I then argue that this latter fact is best explained by the hypothesis that revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience. By inference to the best explanation, I conclude that the thesis of revelation is indeed part of our implicit conception of experience. The argument is summarised as follows:

- (Premise I) The essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd.  
 (Premise II) The fact that the essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd is best explained by appealing to the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience.  
 (Conclusion) The thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience.

I shall now argue for Premise I and Premise II in turn.

### 4.3 Premise I

My argument for Premise I takes the following form:

- (i) There is some reading of ‘know what X really is’ which allows (2) to be rendered odd.

<sup>6</sup> Participants were also asked about (3) and (4) in the same experiment reported in fn5. The average ratings for (3) and (4) were 2.20 (SD=1.54) and 5.11 (SD=1.80). 66% gave (4) a score of 5 or above. In contrast, only 16.6% gave (3) a score of 5 or above and 74.4% gave it a score of 3 or below.

<sup>7</sup> In saying that there is a particular *reading* of sentence (2), I mean that it is possible to interpret or understand (2) in a particular way.

- (ii) There are two kinds of reading of ‘know what X really is’: (a) the essential reading; (b) non-essential readings.
- (iii) No non-essential reading of ‘know what X really is’ in (2) renders the sentence odd.

(Premise I) The essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd.

Let me first say something to support (i). Both sentences (1) and (2) include the construction ‘know what X really is’. It seems that if we want to know what explains our intuitions regarding these sentences, it is important to pin down, as I shall do shortly, what this construction—‘know what X really is’—means in English. It seems plausible that it is our interpreting the phrase ‘know what X really is’, and also ‘don’t know what X really is’, in a particular way that allows (2) to be rendered odd (where X = the feeling of an itch), but not (1) (where X = gold). Given the aforesaid, we can put forward (i). I shall now argue for (ii) and (iii).

#### 4.3.1 Know What X Really is

In English, we can say that someone knows the underlying essence of something with the following construction:

- (5) S knows what X really is.<sup>8</sup>

as in:

- (6) Every 10-year-old knows what water is, but not every 10-year-old knows what water *really* is. Claire, who had memorised the entire periodic table by age 8, knows what water *really* is.

But ‘S knows what X really is’ may be used in ways that have nothing to do with the essence of X, as in:

- (7) Gloria knows what these marbles *really* are: they are worthless things.

This use of ‘S knows what something really is’ is similar to ‘S knows who someone really is’ as in:

- (8) Tom has become a regular guest at family gatherings, but only Claire knows who Tom *really* is: Tom is a conman.

<sup>8</sup> Instead of ‘really’, other adverbial phrases, such as ‘essentially’, ‘actually’, ‘in fact’, can also be used. Adverbial phrases are not necessary for making claims about something’s essence. Sometimes we can just use the copula ‘is’, as in ‘heat is mean kinetic energy’.

In these contexts, to know what X really is does not necessarily mean that one knows the essence or some essential properties of X.

In general, when a speaker utters the sentence ‘S knows what X really is’, she means something like the following: S knows some proposition P about X and P is significant in some salient way, contrasting with propositions one already knows or others know about X. P could pick out a variety of properties of X. For instance, in uttering the sentence ‘Elijah knows what a diamond really is’, the speaker might have in mind that Elijah has knowledge about (i) a diamond’s chemical composition (its essence); (ii) where it comes from (its origin); (iii) what it could be made to do mechanically (its industrial use); (iv) what cultural meaning it carries (its symbolism); and so forth.

Although propositional knowledge P, indicated by the utterance ‘S knows what X really is’, can be heterogenous, the kinds of properties of X that P could be latching onto fall into two salient categories. Sometimes, we are particularly interested in what the underlying essence or nature of something is. This is no surprise since the notion of essence plausibly plays an important role in our everyday thinking. So on hearing the phrase ‘S knows what X really is’, we might tend to interpret it to mean that S knows some proposition P where P describes the essence or an essential property of X. Call this ‘the essential reading’ of ‘know what X really is’. Other times, we are merely interested in some specific property of X, signalled by the relevant context, which has nothing to do with X’s essence. So, alternatively, P could be a proposition that describes a contextually salient but non-essential property of X. Call this a ‘non-essential reading’ of ‘know what X really is’. Context usually makes it clear which kind of reading is in force. In the absence of adequate contextual information, one might interpret the phrase ‘S knows what X really is’ either way.

Here, it is worth saying something more about the essential reading of ‘know what X really is’. Lewis (1995: pp. 141–143) distinguishes between two senses of *knowing what something is*: (i) what he calls ‘an uncommonly demanding and literal sense of “knowing what”’, which requires the subject to know the essence of the thing in question; (ii) a ‘not-so-demanding, not-so-literal, everyday sense’ of knowing what something is, which does not require one to know the essence of the thing. Indeed, the demanding sense of ‘know what’ is a familiar interpretation of ‘knowing what something is’. In interpreting Socrates on what it means to know what something is, Gail Fine (2014: p. 35) writes:

On a familiar view, the claim is that to know what something is, is to know its essence; and to know what something is like (or, equivalently, to know anything further about the thing) is to know its nonessential properties.

My point in this subsection is that in some contexts, a speaker who says that someone knows what something *really* is might best be interpreted as expressing Lewis’ ‘uncommonly demanding and literal sense of “knowing what”’.

Given these clarifications regarding the phrase ‘know what X really is’, let’s now return to our sentences.

### 4.3.2 Explaining the sentences

Consider sentence (1):

(1) I know what gold looks like, but I don't know what gold really is.

As we just saw, there are two kinds of reading of 'know what X really is': (a) the essential reading, and (b) non-essential readings. On the essential reading, in saying that 'I don't know what gold really is', I take myself to lack knowledge about the scientific definition or underlying essence of gold. With this meaning intended, one can easily imagine sentences like (1) being uttered in a science class.

One can also build a scenario where 'know what X really is' is used in a way that is not about essences. For instance, imagine someone putting out 'fake news' about gold:

(9) Everyone knows what gold looks like—it looks shiny and expensive—but they don't know what gold really is—it is a substance planted on Earth by aliens.

Here, the adverb signals that there is some contextually salient property of gold that everyone is ignorant of, i.e. being a substance planted on Earth by aliens. With this kind of scenario in mind, one would not find (1) odd. So, it seems that (1) does not sound odd on either the essential or non-essential readings.

Now, let's turn to sentence (2), which sounds odd to many:

(2) I know what an itch feels like, but I don't know what the feeling of an itch really is.

I shall now argue for premise (iii):

(iii) No non-essential reading of 'know what X really is' in (2) renders the sentence odd.

Imagine Diogenes the Cynic has been preaching to the Athenians on itches. Imagine a particular Athenian, upon hearing Diogenes' sermon on itches, thinks to himself:

(10) I knew what an itch felt like, but I didn't know what the feeling of an itch really was. Diogenes is right. The feeling of an itch is there to remind us that we are merely animals like dogs.

I suspect that most of us would not find (10) odd on this non-essential reading. In the context of (10), our Athenian thinks that the feeling of an itch has a salient property of being a particular kind of reminder to us, but this property is intuitively not part of the essence of the feeling of an itch. What this means is that we would not find (2) odd if we were to consider contexts like that in (10).

We can then say that there are *some* contexts in which a non-essential reading of ‘know what X really is’ does not render (2) odd. This of course does not immediately warrant the conclusion that there are *no* contexts in which a non-essential reading is clearly in force and (2) sounds odd. But note that it is not particularly difficult to come up with scenarios which highlight some possible non-essential features of the feeling of an itch. Consider:

- (11) I knew what an itch felt like, but I didn’t know what the feeling of an itch really was.
- (a) It was a signal that the spirit wanted to communicate with me.
  - (b) It was a test from God.
  - (c) It was revered by the superstitious villagers.
  - (d) It was something that was used by the monks to practice self-control.

(2) would not sound odd if one had one of these scenarios in mind. Indeed, although the kind of knowledge about non-essential aspects of the feeling of an itch indicated by the second conjunct ‘I don’t know what the feeling of pain *really* is’ might be heterogeneous, there is no reason to think that (2) would be rendered odd in a particular context in which the non-essential reading is in force. After all, there is nothing contradictory about claiming that one knows what an itch feels like, i.e. ‘An itch feels like thus-and-so’, and then going on to state that one is ignorant about some specific non-essential feature associated with *the feeling of an itch*, whatever that non-essential feature turns out to be. Hence, we can plausibly conclude that no non-essential reading of ‘know what X really is’ renders (2) odd, i.e. (iii).

Now, we know that there is some reading of ‘know what X really is’ that allows (2) to be rendered odd, i.e. (i). Since knowing what X really is amounts to knowing either (part of) the essence of X or some non-essential property of X which is contextually significant in some way, i.e. (ii), and since non-essential readings do not render (2) odd, i.e. (iii), one may then infer that the contexts in which (2) is rendered odd are contexts where we are considering the sentence under the essential reading. So, we have Premise I:

(Premise I) The essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd.<sup>9</sup>

Note that the conclusion here is not that sentence (2) invariably sounds odd with the essential reading of ‘know what the feeling of an itch really is’. In some contexts, (2) might not sound odd even though the essential reading is in force. Imagine that our inquisitive Athenian, preoccupied with the feeling of an itch, travels through time to the present and hears a captivating lecture on neuroscience and the mind–body

<sup>9</sup> Note also that in the experiment reported in fn5, participants were presented with a vignette which contained an example that explicitly deployed the essential reading of ‘know what X really is’. Given this cueing, the essential reading was likely to be in force when participants judged the relevant sentences.

problem from a renowned physicalist. Persuaded by the lecturer, the Athenian might think to himself:

- (12) I know what an itch feels like, but I don't know what the feeling of an itch really is. When we figure out the neural basis of consciousness, then we will know what the feeling of an itch really is.<sup>10</sup>

Some scientific contexts invite consideration of *hidden* essences. Indeed, a scientifically minded person might not find (12) odd where the essential reading is in force. Such a person might not find (2) odd either. Thus, (2) is not *always* rendered odd on the essential reading. It is important to note that this fact does not undermine Premise I, which states only that the essential reading *allows* (2) to be rendered odd. The point here is that there are ordinary everyday contexts in which the essential reading of (2) renders the sentence odd. So, the fact that (2) might not be rendered odd in some scientific contexts where the essential reading is in force does not undermine Premise I, nor the conclusion to be established in the next Sect. 4.4, that revelation is part of the ordinary conception of experience.

#### 4.4 Premise II

Having established Premise I, let's now turn to Premise II:

- (Premise II) The fact that the essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd is best explained by appealing to the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience.

If the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience, then it should be no surprise that we implicitly draw on the thesis in thinking and making judgements about experience, including judgements about whether particular sentences about experiences sound strange. Let's consider how the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience provides an explanation for the oddness found in (2) on the essential reading of 'know what X really is'. Consider (2) again:

- (2) I know what an itch feels like, but I don't know what the feeling of an itch *really* is.

In English, the word 'feeling', like the word 'experience', is sometimes understood as designating a phenomenal type, i.e. referring to a specific phenomenal property, as in 'the feeling of pain', 'the feeling of loneliness', 'the feeling of being in love', etc. The phrase 'the feeling of an itch', in this case, is thus naturally understood as

<sup>10</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on examples of this sort.

designating a phenomenal experience-type, i.e. the phenomenal property or phenomenal character of an itchy experience—the itchiness of an itch.

Given the first conjunct of (2), ‘I know what an itch feels like’, one would expect the subject to have experienced a token experience of an itch with phenomenal property Q (where Q is the feeling of an itch). Given the thesis of revelation, one would expect the subject to know a proposition ‘Q is X’ where the predicate ‘X’ captures the essence of Q (e.g. ‘The feeling of an itch is thus-and-so’). For the subject to continue with the second conjunct—‘but I don’t know what the feeling of an itch really is’—makes the sentence sound contradictory and hence odd. So, the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of the implicit conception of experience explains very well why the essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd.

Is there an alternative explanation for Premise I that is superior to the explanation I have just sketched? One might think that the oddness of (2) is due to the lack of an ordinarily available scenario that would make (2) not odd.<sup>11</sup> On this objection, our common discourse about gold and general knowledge of an atomistic reality offers immediately available scenarios to contextualise and make sense of (1). In contrast, we don’t have such easily available scenarios in the case of itchy feelings. (2) is then judged odd, not because revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience and we are operating with an essential reading of ‘know what X really is’, but because, given that scenarios like (10)–(12) are not readily available to the interpreter, it is unclear what the sentence is trying to say.

In response, one might argue that this alternative proposal does not really explain why (2) is odd in the sense at issue, that is, why it seems to be contradictory (when considered in an ordinary, non-scientific context). Consider an analogous sentence about triangles, introduced in the vignette reported in fn5:

(13) I know that a triangle is a closed shape with three sides, but I don’t know what a triangle really is.

(13) is odd, but not because of a lack of scenarios to contextualise the sentence. It is not unclear what (13) is trying to say. What is unclear is how what (13) says could possibly be true. The sentence is odd in the sense that it seems contradictory on the essential reading. The oddness of (2) is arguably analogous to that of (13). My proposed explanation of the oddness of (2) extends smoothly to the case of (13). (2) is odd because it is part of our ordinary conception of conscious experiences like itches that it is not possible to know what an itch feels like without knowing what the feeling of an itch really is (on the essential reading). Analogously, (13) is odd because it is not possible to know the definition of a triangle—that a triangle is a closed shape with three sides—without knowing what a triangle really is (on the essential reading).

Furthermore, this putative pragmatic explanation leaves some questions with less satisfactory answers than the present proposal. The first question concerns the

<sup>11</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.



following points. In arguing that (1) and (2) are not odd on a non-essential reading, I appeal to hypothetical scenarios, i.e. fake news about gold in (9) and the Athenian hearing Diogenes' sermon in (10). Gold and itchy feelings are both familiar things we converse about in everyday life. I think insofar as the non-essential reading is in force, there is no reason to assume that we have more available scenarios to contextualise (1) than (2). But why is it that despite the equal availability of hypothetical contexts which facilitate non-essential readings of 'know what X really is' with respect to both (1) and (2), we seem to have the linguistic intuition that (2) sounds odd but not (1)?

This first question naturally leads to a second question. As I acknowledged at the end of Sect. 4.3, (2) might not sound strange on the essential reading if the interpreter is in a scientific context. On this alternative explanation, such a scenario, e.g. (12) which involves a lecture on neuroscience and the mind–body problem, is not readily available to most of us when interpreting (2). Had it been so readily available, we would not have judged (2) as odd. But why is it that we do not readily call upon cases like (12) involving neuroscience when interpreting (2), whereas, in contrast, when interpreting (1) we can easily imagine the sentence being uttered in a science class?

The alternative explanation in terms of ordinary availability of scenarios cannot satisfactorily answer both of these questions. In response to the first question, a proponent of the alternative explanation can say that (2) is judged as odd but not (1) because scenarios like (12), which might render (2) as not odd on the essential reading, are not readily available to the interpreter. But this leaves the second question unanswered—just why is it that we don't think of advances in neuroscience to make sense of (2)?<sup>12</sup> In contrast, my proposal has the resources to address these two questions. It leaves room for maintaining an important difference between how we ordinarily think about the essences of natural kinds like gold and those of feelings understood as phenomenal properties or the what-it-is-likeness of our experiences. Crucially, while we are used to thinking natural kinds like gold have hidden essences, as the literature on developmental psychology has indeed illustrated (e.g. Medin & Ortony, 1989; Keil, 1989; Gelman, 2003), it is not part of our ordinary thinking that feelings have hidden essences. On the essential reading of 'know what X really is' and the hypothesis that it is part of our ordinary conception of gold that it has a hidden essence, (1) would not sound odd. In contrast, on the same reading and the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience, (2) would naturally be rendered odd.<sup>13</sup> Given the disparity in how we ordinarily conceive things like gold on one hand, and feelings on the other hand, it is

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it does not seem particularly plausible to insist that the general idea of neuroscience is not familiar to us in everyday contexts whereas the idea of an atomistic reality is.

<sup>13</sup> Given both (1) and (2) contrast *what X is like*, where X is 'gold' in (1) and 'the feeling of an itch' in (2), with *what X really is*, and given non-essential readings of the sentences seem cognitively demanding, requiring the interpreter to come up with hypothetical scenarios, it is plausible that the essential reading is the default interpretation of these sentences. Note again that given the vignette reported in fn5, participants likely deployed the essential reading of 'know what X really is' when interpreting the relevant sentences.

no surprise, in answer to the first question, that (2) is judged as odd but not (1) provided that one is operating on the essential reading of ‘know what X really is’; and, in answer to the second question, that scenarios like (12) are not readily available to us.

The upshot is this. Given that sentences (1) and (2) are syntactically similar, there must be something about our respective conceptions of gold and itchy feelings, as well as the way we interpret the phrase ‘know what X really is’, which explains the difference between our judgements about these two sentences, namely, that (2) is judged as odd but not (1). If we agree that the essential and non-essential readings exhaust all readings of ‘know what X really is’, and that no non-essential reading of ‘know what X really is’ renders (2) odd, as I have argued in the last section, then Premise I—the essential reading of ‘know what X really is’ *allows* (2) to be rendered odd—naturally follows. It seems that once we have established that, the hypothesis according to which revelation is part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience emerges as a simple and straightforward explanation. So, in the absence of a better candidate explanation for the fact reported in Premise I, we shall take it to be the best explanation.

Let’s sum up our argument so far. In the last subsection, we established that:

(Premise I) There is some reading of (2) which allows the sentence to be rendered odd, i.e. the essential reading.

In this subsection, we have argued in favour of Premise II:

(Premise II) The fact that the essential reading of (2) allows the sentence to be rendered odd is best explained by appealing to the hypothesis that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience.

By inference to the best explanation, we can conclude:

(Conclusion) The thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience.

## 5 The intuition of dualism

Our discussion in Sects. 3 and 4 has shown that the thesis of revelation, which is intuitive in the sense of being part of our ordinary conception of experience, is in tension with physicalism. But this on its own does not explain why, as a psychological fact, we have a widespread and persistent intuition of dualism, i.e. the intuition that consciousness is nonphysical, since the latter intuition does not usually present itself as the conclusion of an argument. In this section, I shall apply the results of the last two sections to the discussion of the intuition of dualism and put forward a rational explanation for the latter.

As mentioned in Sect. 1, there has been much discussion of the intuition of dualism (or intuition of distinctness; see fn1) in recent literature on the metaphysics of consciousness. Physicalists tell us that consciousness is physical; they identify phenomenal properties of our conscious experiences with purely physical properties, e.g. the painfulness of pain is just the physical property of being an event of C-fibres firing. But physicalists' phenomenal-physical identity claims seem puzzling. There seems to be a persistent and plausibly widespread intuition of dualism—the intuition that phenomenal properties are not physical properties—when we think about the nature of consciousness (Bogardus, 2013; Chalmers, 2018; Papineau, 2002, 2008, 2011).

An effective way to bring out the intuition of dualism is to consider the intuitive disanalogy between *phenomenal-physical identity claims* such as 'the experience of pain (in humans)=the firing of C-fibres in the brain', which physicalists standardly uphold, and *scientific identity claims* such as 'water=H<sub>2</sub>O' (see also Kripke, 1980; Levine, 1983; Papineau, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Sundström, 2017). When presented with phenomenal-physical identity claims, it seems that we can't help but keep asking questions such as 'Why is pain experience C-fibres firing?' or 'Why is C-fibres firing the experience of pain?'. We seem to be puzzled by the idea that the phenomenal character of a pain experience, i.e. the painfulness of pain, is just the physical property of being the physical event of C-fibres firing. In contrast, we certainly do not persist in asking why water is H<sub>2</sub>O or why H<sub>2</sub>O is water. There is nothing puzzling about identity claims like 'water is H<sub>2</sub>O'. This inclination to persist in questioning physical-phenomenal identity claims demonstrates that we have a persistent intuition that phenomenal types are not physical types, i.e. an intuition of dualism.

Many physicalists have themselves acknowledged the existence of such a dualistic intuition (e.g. Braddon-Mitchell, 2007; Lewis, 1995; Papineau, 2002, 2008, 2011, 2020; Perry, 2001; Sundström, 2017). In a recent paper, Pär Sundström (2017) writes:

Many of us have an exceptional resistance to the physicalist identity thesis. The resistance is exceptional in that we do not have it to other identifications that we have sufficiently good reason to accept, like the identification of liquidity with loose molecular connection, or of Cicero with Tully, or of myself with the shopper who set off the alarm.

Sundström cites physicalists such as John Perry and David Papineau to make the point that even physicalists themselves acknowledge the seeming 'absurdity' of physicalism. According to Perry (2001: p. 4): '[t]o say that this, the feeling I am aware of when I, so to speak, look inward, is that, the thing [some brain state] I read about, just seems crazy'. According to Papineau (2011: p. 5), 'we cannot stop ourselves thinking about the mind-brain relation in a dualistic way'.

Here I shall define the intuition of dualism as the intuition that *consciousness—the phenomenal character or phenomenal property of our conscious experience—is nonphysical* (see Chalmers, 2018: p. 12). There is much debate about what intuitions are, whether they are beliefs, dispositions, *sui generis* states, etc. (Pust, 2017). We need not get into this debate here. With respect to our intuition of dualism, we can simply take it to be *a belief or disposition to believe that phenomenal properties are*

*nonphysical*. Such an intuition arises prior to explicit philosophical argument, but also survives it. Avowed physicalists who have considered and rejected anti-physicalist arguments can also share a persistent intuition of dualism, as they often do.

Like other beliefs that a rational agent might have, the intuition of dualism is plausibly governed by reasons and can be made intelligible with reference to our other beliefs and attitudes. I think the fact that the thesis of revelation is part of our implicit conception of experience plausibly identifies an important rationale of the intuition of dualism and thus offers a *rational* explanation for the latter. According to this explanation, in many cases, the belief or disposition to believe that phenomenal properties are not physical properties has an inferential or inference-like aetiology that can be traced to our implicit understanding of the thesis of revelation, and an implicit appreciation of an entailment from the thesis of revelation to the claim that phenomenal properties are not physical properties.

One might immediately worry that intuitions, including the intuition of dualism, are not supposed to be inferential. Intuitions are often said to be non-inferential in the sense that they are not the results of inferences from other doxastic states (Jackson, 2018). But it is worth pointing out that in stating that intuitions are non-inferential in this psychological sense, philosophers often mean that they are not formed as the result of the subject *consciously* inferring them from premises with contents of other doxastic states. For instance, Joel Pust (2000: p. 30) makes this explicit: ‘many philosophers seem to use “intuition” to refer to a kind of spontaneous or non-inferential judgement or belief ... Intuitions are not the result of conscious inference’ (see also Weinberg, 2007: p. 318). It seems very plausible that an intuition such as the intuition of dualism could still have an inferential or inference-like aetiology which the subject is unconscious of or has no introspective access to.

Indeed, many of our contentful mental states have inference-like aetiologies which we are not consciously aware of, but which we appeal to in explaining a subject’s judgements or behaviours in general. Consider someone who can fluently read Russian script aloud. In doing so, the speaker draws on her knowledge of letter-sound rules, i.e. rules that go from certain orthographic representations to corresponding phonological representations (see Davies, 2015). She does not consciously infer from these rules in reading. If she needed to do so, she would not be able to read fluently. Implicit knowledge of these rules explains the speaker’s correct reading of a particular Cyrillic letter string as well as her general ability to read Russian scripts.

Consider also Peacocke’s (2008: p. 114) example of how someone who has not yet learned the relevant truth tables can come to appreciate the validity of the primitive axiom schema:  $A \rightarrow (A \text{ or } B)$ ; or the primitive inference rule: ‘From A, a conclusion of the form “A or B” can be inferred’. Peacocke (2008: p. 115) suggests that the thinker’s acceptance of the axiom or rule as valid involves a simulation exercise. For instance, she first imagines the case that A is true and B is false and, drawing on her understanding of alternation, comes to evaluate ‘A or B’ as true. She then imagines the case that A is true and B true, and so on through all the cases. Eventually, she is ‘in a position to accept rationally that there will be no cases in which the antecedent, or premise, [A] is true, and the consequent, or conclusion, [‘A or B’] is false [and thus to] accept rationally the axiom or rule as valid’ (Peacocke, 2008: p. 116). In the starting case, Peacocke explains our thinker’s judgement that ‘A or B’

is true in terms of the simulated truth-values in the case ( $A$  is true and  $B$  is false), plus her *understanding* of the connective ‘or’. Crucially, for Peacocke (2008: pp. 116–117), the thinker’s understanding of the connective ‘or’ involves her possession of an implicit conception, i.e. a state of tacit knowledge, ‘with the following content: that any sentence of the form “ $A$  or  $B$ ” is true if and only if either  $A$  is true or  $B$  is true’. The thinker’s pattern of judgements about various cases, as well as her eventual appreciation that the logical axiom or rule is valid, is understanding-based. It draws on her understanding of the connective ‘or’ or her grasp of the concept of alternation, and thus on her possession of an implicit conception. But this does not mean that she needs to make a conscious inference from a premise with the content of this implicit conception. As Peacocke (2008: p. 117) puts it, the implicit conception is ‘influential in the thinker’s evaluation of alternations’ but the thinker ‘need not have any explicit knowledge of its content’, where explicit knowledge, in this context, refers to knowledge that the knower is consciously aware of or can articulate by means of a verbal statement.

I think our intuition of dualism may work in a similar way. Our judgement that phenomenal properties are not physical properties draws on our tacit or implicit understanding of the thesis of revelation and on a tacit or implicit appreciation of an entailment from the thesis of revelation to the claim that phenomenal properties are not physical properties. This does not mean that we need to reason consciously and meticulously from the thesis of revelation as premise to the conclusion that phenomenal properties are not physical properties, nor do we need to explicitly or consciously entertain the thesis of revelation itself. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that upon suitable prompting, we can make explicit our implicit understanding of the thesis of revelation, just as upon suitable enquiry, it is possible that our Russian speaker can explicitly state the letter-sound rules she appeals to, and that the thinker in Peacocke’s case can make explicit her implicit conception of the connective ‘or’. So in an important respect, our tacit understanding of the thesis of revelation is different from Chomskyan tacit knowledge of linguistic rules, which explains our judgements of whether certain sentences are grammatical. One might think that in the latter case, since the grammatical notions involved in linguistic rules are technical notions, explicit statements of the linguistic rules cannot be elicited from the subject even upon suitable prompting.

One might further add that our intuition of dualism typically arises when we reflect on particular instances of phenomenal experiences that we are having or calling to mind. So, the intuition of dualism can be conceived as the output of an inferential or inference-like transition from having or recalling such experiences. We can further conceive this transition as involving two sub-transitions. In the first place, there is a transition from having or recalling a mental state with a *particular* phenomenal property  $Q_0$ , to a representational state with the following content:

[R1]  $Q_0$  is not a physical property.

This transition is facilitated by our understanding of the thesis of revelation and an appreciation of an entailment from the thesis of revelation to the claim that  $Q_0$  is not a physical property. This entailment goes in a similar way to the

argument laid out in Sect. 3.<sup>14</sup> I have also argued that revelation is intuitive in the sense of being part of our implicit conception of experience. So, it is most likely that information regarding revelation can be drawn on—accessed and used—when we think about a particular phenomenal property of our experience.

In the second place, there is a transition from [R1] to a representational state with a more generalised content:

[R2] Phenomenal properties are not physical properties.

The thesis of revelation does not make a specific claim about a specific phenomenal property. It is a general rule that can be deployed when we think about any phenomenal property. So, in reaching the conclusion that  $Q_0$  is not a physical property, one can appreciate that the conclusion is not drawn from specific information about  $Q_0$ . The conclusion [R1] depends only on  $Q_0$  falling within the range of the variable 'Q', which is restricted to phenomenal properties. So, by universal generalisation, what goes for  $Q_0$  goes for any phenomenal property, and we have the conclusion [R2]. Thus, this second transition from [R1] to [R2] involves our implicit appreciation of the rule of universal generalisation.

It is worth noting that on this explanation, subjects who have an intuition of dualism might hold different positions with respect to the thesis of revelation. As already mentioned, a subject might not have explicitly or consciously formed a view about the thesis of revelation even though her implicit conception of experience incorporates the latter and might be what gives rise to her intuition of dualism. It is possible that as a result of forming an explicit belief that phenomenal properties are not physical properties, such a subject comes to appreciate and explicitly accept the thesis of revelation. It is also possible that instead of taking a positive explicit view of revelation, a subject adopts a negative explicit view of revelation because of the influence of science or philosophy. But even in this last case, where she denies the thesis of revelation on theoretical grounds, she might still be influenced by her pre-theoretical, implicit conception of experience that incorporates the thesis, and hence also find dualism intuitive at some level. An analogous case would be the sceptics who deny, on philosophical-theoretical grounds, that we have everyday knowledge, but who are nonetheless still influenced by their implicit conception of knowledge, whose content incorporates the claim that we have everyday knowledge, and participate in ordinary discourse which makes everyday knowledge attributions. The overall situation seems to be

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<sup>14</sup> Note that the explanation for the intuition of dualism put forward here only depends on an *implicit appreciation* of an alleged incompatibility between revelation and physicalism. Such an implicit appreciation can exist even if revelation turns out to be compatible with physicalism. In other words, the explanation at issue does not depend on whether the argument put forward in Sect. 2 is strictly speaking correct, only that the subject implicitly takes it to be correct. Furthermore, it seems plausible that there is such an implicit appreciation. After all, many philosophers, including physicalists, explicitly endorse the incompatibility between revelation and physicalism (e.g. Braddon-Mitchell 2007; Chalmers 2016, 2018; Goff 2015, 2017; Hill 2014; Lewis 1995; McLaughlin 2001, 2003; Papineau 2020). So, it would seem that the argument from revelation against the claim that phenomenal properties are physical properties, whether or not it is ultimately correct, is certainly compelling enough to be tacitly appreciated by a rational person.

that our having an implicit understanding that includes the thesis of revelation, as well as our having an intuition of dualism which results from the latter, is consistent with a subject having no explicit view, or a positive explicit view, or even a negative explicit view of revelation.

In putting forward the above explanation of the intuition of dualism in terms of our implicit understanding of the thesis of revelation, I do not wish to claim that this is the only explanation for the intuition of dualism. The intuition of dualism may have different sources (see Papineau, 2020). There could also be different styles of explanation, e.g. mechanistic, cultural, evolutionary, etc. Here, I have focused on expounding a rational explanation for the intuition on the reasonable assumption that the latter, like many of our beliefs and contentful mental states, has an inferential aetiology. Given that the thesis of revelation is part of our ordinary, implicit conception of experience as I have argued in Sect. 4, it is no surprise that there is also an intuition of dualism. It is thus plausible that the intuitiveness of revelation is a crucial source of the intuition of dualism.

## 6 Conclusion

The main concern of this paper was to argue for the intuitiveness of revelation and contend that the intuition of dualism may have an inferential aetiology that can plausibly be traced to our implicit understanding of revelation. In this paper, I neither argued for the truth of revelation nor argued against physicalism. I now want to tie the discussion in this paper to the wider context of the prospects of physicalism.

In Sect. 2, I clarified the thesis of revelation. While there is more to say regarding how best to formulate the thesis and what its precise implications are with respect to various metaphysical theories of consciousness, it seems that the thesis of revelation, as understood in that section, is in tension with the claim that phenomenal properties are physical, a claim to which physicalists standardly subscribe. I have argued that the thesis of revelation is built into our ordinary, implicit conception of experience and phenomenal properties, and can thus be regarded as intuitive. So, there is plausibly a strong argument from the intuitive thesis of revelation against physicalism, as we saw in Sect. 3. Given the established intuitiveness of revelation, a physicalist cannot reject the thesis of revelation outright. Furthermore, as I have argued, our implicit understanding of the thesis of revelation may be a crucial source of our intuition of dualism. Thus, the question of what stance we should take with respect to the thesis of revelation emerges as a particularly important issue for the metaphysical debate about the nature of consciousness.

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