SELF, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND BEING:
The Transcendent Perspective
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**Chapter 24: The Hard Problem Made Easy** +
**References** (for book)

# Book Cover Note

## Everyday Transcendence and the Human Self

Is there a best design for the human self? This book argues that there is. It makes the case in favour of the transcendent self-view – a perspective on the self that transcends ideas and viewpoints generally, seeing and treating them as subordinate facets of a total self that has empty consciousness, the underlying essence of consciousness itself, as its resting focus and core. Two primary claims are defended. First, that this is the one self-view that fully and accurately reflects our true behavioural and experiential nature. Second, that its successful instantiation at a personal level to create the fully developed human should be an alm for both educational programmes and individuals.

Adopting this self-view may be thought of as personal transcendence and even be given a spiritual slant, but it is best seen as an everyday kind of transcendence that is really nothing special – just a sensible and logical endpoint to human development. **An account of how the perspective helps resolve the hard problem of consclousness is also given.**

# Chapter 24

## The Hard Problem Made Easy

### Ontologically Reducible but Epistemologically Irreducible

Recognising that the flesh, blood, and brain view is not quite the one all-encompassing reality of the human organism but is rather a scientifically accurate, external observer's perspective on the whole of the substance of that all-encompassing reality offers us a new take on the problem of consciousness. It allows us to begin to uncover a view of the relationship between the brain and conscious experience in which there is no explanatory gap and no hard problem.

The position in question has two facets. The first being that conscious experience is ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning – nothing over and above it in terms of substance. The second being that it is also, for purely perspectival reasons, epistemologically irreducible to the outside observer's knowledge of that aspect of brain functioning, with this epistemologically irreducible knowledge content nevertheless being ontologically reducible to the aspect of brain functioning in question. The argument in support of this claim has the following steps:

### [1] The Human Body we Know is an Experiential Construct

The first step – the argument for claiming that the flesh, blood, and brain perspective on the human organism is the organism as *experienced* by an outside observer and encompasses the brain as experienced rather than the brain as such – has already been made above. What we see and otherwise sense when there is another human in front of us – or indeed, when we see and otherwise sense ourselves from the outside via a series of mirrors or cameras – cannot be the undoubtedly real physical human behind our seeing and sensing. Since it can only come to our awareness as information acquired via our outward-looking senses – information that comes to us from something that is, in reality, physically distinct from us – it can only be

a (possibly scientifically enhanced) multisensory representation of that reality. What we see and otherwise sense in such situations is not the actual reality of the human (or brain) observed externally; it is a sensory representation of that reality. The brain it entails is – must be – the brain as experienced rather than the brain as such. It is a sensory construct that accurately reflects an underlying reality rather than the reality as such.

**[2] The Brain as an Experiential Construct Within Consciousness**

The second step in the argument then follows as a clear implication of the conclusion that the human organism and its brain as we know them are sensory representations. Clearly, if this human organism and brain as we know them are sensory representations, then they are experiences within consciousness – the body and brain as we know them are the body and brain as experienced. They are inside consciousness as experienced in the sense of being a subset of the totality of our conscious experience. The externally observed human organism and its brain, as they are known to us, are experiential constructs within the panorama of conscious experience.

**[3] Consciousness in a Reality Underlying the Experienced Brain**

*Consciousness: Not Seen as Inside an Experiential Construct*

This clearly has some impact on the notion that conscious experience is somehow inside the brain and is something the brain gives rise to or makes happen. Obviously, when we make such a claim, we do not mean to imply that conscious experience – an aspect of the reality of the human organism – is somehow inside a mental construct that is itself a subset of conscious experience. This is not what we usually intend to imply when we seek to place our conscious experiences inside the brain and ask how the brain can give rise to them, nor does it make any sense to think in these terms.

On the one hand, it makes no sense whatever to seek to place the totality of our conscious experience inside an experience – our sensory construct of the brain – that is a mere subset of the totality of conscious experience. On the other hand, it makes no sense to think of a mental construct as a container for anything other than more detailed

aspects of itself – more detailed experiences of 'brainy stuff' in the context of a mental construct of the brain, for example.

If we think of our mental construct in mainly visual terms, a good analogy would be a video. We would not expect to find the real world inside the video, nor would we expect to find that the video was somehow responsible for creating or giving rise to some part of that real world, nor is it reasonable that we should expect these things. What we would expect to find inside a video if we explored inside it at deeper and deeper levels – or, indeed, inside a mental construct if we did a similar thing – would be more detail of the 'substance' of the video or the mental construct. We would not expect to find anything of the reality beyond either one – the reality that they are representations of.

*Inside the Reality Underlying the Experienced Brain*

Even if we do not necessarily say so explicitly because we tend not to recognise the brain we know as a mental construct, what we intend when we seek to place consciousness inside the brain is not that consciousness is inside our mental construct of the brain. What we intend – and the only thing that makes any sense given that the brain we know *is* a mental construct – is to place it inside the reality underlying our mental construct, the actual reality that is beyond our construct but is reflected within our construct.

If conscious experience is inside anything, it is inside that underlying reality. If anything contains, creates, and gives rise to conscious experience, it is not our mental construct of the brain part of the flesh, blood, and brain perspective on the organism; it is the reality that is reflected within that construct but is, in actuality, outwith and beyond it.

This is a minor qualification on the face of it, given that this is essentially what we usually mean to imply anyway, but it is an important one in respect of the clarity of our thinking about what is required to solve the problem of conscious experience.

## [4] Different Ways of Knowing the Same Underlying Thing

*Experiences not Observed Inside This Underlying Reality*

There is more to consider here, however. If our conscious experience is somehow inside the reality underlying the brain as the external observer knows it, it cannot be there in the simple sense of a chair being inside a house or a rock being inside a mountain.

It is safe to say that no one has ever observed anything like conscious experiences – things like tinkling sounds, orange flashes, or sad thoughts – inside this externally observed brain, nor is it possible to imagine how anyone ever could (cf., e.g., Kanai & Tsuchiya, 2012; Searle, 1998; Skokowski, 2022). The things that have been observed there to date – brain processes, fleshy bundles of electrochemically active neurons, ganglions, synapses, and so on (Scruton, 2020) – are clearly not anything remotely like the mental things like feelings, images, and ideas this perspective on things would have us place inside it. Indeed, these qualia of conscious experience seem, on the face of it, to be so very different from things like firing neuron cells that it is impossible to imagine we could ever observe these things of the mind inside these fleshy, electrochemical things we call brains.

*But Science Demands They Must be Observed in Some Sense*

This is a major problem for anyone seeking to adopt a scientific approach to the study of either the human organism or of conscious experience and consciousness. A scientist will not usually accept that something exists within some aspect of the world unless it can, in some form or fashion (cf. *Observation beyond our eyes*, 2022), be observed to exist there. If our conscious experiences are inside the reality underlying an outside observer's view of the brain – and it is reasonable to assume that they are there in some sense – they can only be there as things the outside observer knows or experiences differently. They can only be there in the sense of being things that the external observer *can* observe there but does not recognise as conscious experiences because they are known or experienced quite differently when they *are* known or experienced as conscious experiences.

*Entirely Possible They are Observed as Direct Experiences*

This represents a state of affairs not normally encountered in nature but is, of course, quite possible in the case of the human organism. It is

entirely possible that our conscious experiences are not inside the reality of the human organism in the simple sense of a chair being inside a house or a rock being inside a mountain. We have an inner view of our own internal states in a way that mountains and houses do not – and that we ourselves do not have of mountains, houses, or anything else in nature. We have direct experience of our own thoughts, feelings, and other sensations in a way that is not found in most of nature. We know what it is like to feel pleasure, sense redness, think thoughts, experience solidity, and every other aspect of the panorama of our consciousness in a way that is only possible by knowing them directly from within and not by knowing them indirectly from without.

It is therefore possible that our conscious experiences are not inside the reality of the human organism in the simple sense of a chair being inside a house, a rock being inside a mountain, or a hypothalamus being inside a brain. It is possible that they are inside the reality underlying the brain we experience as outside observers in the special sense of being something inside that underlying reality that the outside observer knows and experiences in one way and the internal observer knows or experiences in another. It is possible that they are directly experienced aspects of some part or parts of the functioning brain that the outside observer only experiences in quite different indirect ways (cf., e.g., Jones, 2019 on Locke, Russell, and Strawson).

*The Same Things Experienced in Very Different Ways*

Indeed, given that our conscious experiences must surely be inside this underlying reality in some sense, this is the only possibility that fits the facts as we know them.

If our thoughts, feelings, and sensations are in the real brain underlying the outside observer's experience of that real brain but cannot be observed there, they can only be regarded by science as being in the brain if they *are* being observed there but are known differently. They can only be regarded by science as being in the brain if the outside observer *can* observe them there but observes – that is to say, experiences – them in a way that makes them seem quite different to the internal observer's experience of them. They can only be so regarded by science if some of the things the external observer observes when experiencing them indirectly are actually the same

things that the internal observer observes when experiencing them directly – if they are really these same things experienced in a very different way.

If our thoughts, feelings, and sensations are in the brain but cannot be observed there by an outside observer and are so different from what can be observed there that we cannot even imagine them ever being observed there, this is the only possibility. They can only be there as things the external observer does observe there but in a very different form; they can only be aspects of the externally known or experienced brain that are also known – in a quite different internal and direct form – by an internal observer. Our conscious experiences *can be* some thing or things inside the reality underlying the brain we experience as external observers, but if they are, they must be the thing or things in question known directly as the inside observer knows them rather than indirectly as the outside observer knows them. Our conscious experiences and some kind of electrochemical activity inside the reality underlying the brain we know as external observers can be one thing or feature, but only if we take it that they are one thing known from entirely different viewpoints by the internal and external observers.

*Not as Unlikely as it may at First Seem*

This is not as unlikely as it may, at first, seem. It appears unlikely mainly because we often imagine the problem in a misleading way – a way that makes it seem impossible that something in the brain can be the same thing as a sensation or a thought. We think of the brain as something solid and fleshy with folds of matter and bundles of neurons and conclude that the idea that a thought or a sensation can be the same thing as such solid, fleshy stuff is more than a little far-fetched. But there are things in the brain that are not solid, fleshy stuff – electrical discharges being the obvious example.

If we think of an example where the inner experience is an orange flash of light that the external observer sees as an electrical discharge presented on a screen as a grey or white flash, the idea that the two might be different perspectives on the same thing seems more reasonable. The idea that there is a single electrical discharge that the internal observer experiences as an orange flash and the external observer experiences as a white flash is easier to accept than if we try

to imagine a neuron cell and a sweet taste being the same thing. Especially when one considers that a little fiddling with the monitor showing the external observer a white flash might easily transform the white flash into a blue, a yellow, or an orange one.

The difference will seem more pronounced, of course, if we stick with a white flash on a screen for the external observer but choose a sound, a sensation of touch, or a thought as our inner experience. Again, though, it is not impossible to imagine changing the external observer's mode of observation so that an electrical discharge experienced as a sound or a thought by the internal observer is presented to the observer as a sound via a loudspeaker or as words on a screen. Or, indeed, transmitted to the external observer in a more direct way, so that it directly creates the sound or the thought in the observer's own consciousness. If we think of the one thing as an electrical discharge, the possibility that it can be known differently – perhaps even very differently – by different observers becomes entirely credible and much easier to accept. The assumption is that our internal observer knows the electrical discharge in a direct and unmediated way from the inside, and our external observer knows the same discharge from the outside in a way mediated by his senses and his observational instrumentation.

In these circumstances, it is surely unsurprising if the two observations of a single thing seem very different to the two observers. In the world at large, seeing the same thing from two different perspectives can make it look very different, even where both observations are made by an external observer – think of an upside-down pyramid observed from above and from the side, for example. So it is entirely possible for something in the reality that underlies the experienced brain to look very different to an internal observer experiencing it directly in an unmediated way from the inside and an external observer experiencing it indirectly in a mediated way from the outside.

*The Same Things Experienced Differently*

It is thus entirely possible that the panorama of our conscious experience is inside the reality that underlies the experienced brain in the special sense of being an inside observer's direct view of something that looks and feels quite different to the external observer.

It is quite possible that it and some aspect or aspects of that underlying reality are the same physical thing, known in entirely different ways. If conscious experience is inside the reality underlying the experienced brain but cannot be observed there by an outside observer, then it can only be there in this special sense. It can only be there as something that is ontologically reducible to something the external observer *can* observe there but knows – or experiences – in a very different way. Conscious experiences must be the same thing as states in the brain in terms of substance, but known in very different ways – something that, as we have just seen, is entirely possible in the case of conscious experience. It is entirely possible that what an internal observer knows in a direct way as a conscious experience (by being it) is something an external observer knows in an indirect way via externally focused senses, as a state in the brain.

**[5] Inner View Epistemologically Irreducible to Outer View**

The notion that conscious experiences are the same thing as states in the brain in terms of substance but known in very different ways by an outside observer dependent on indirect knowing and an inside observer capable of direct knowing suggests something else about them.

It suggests that, in addition to being entirely ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning, our conscious experiences entail knowledge content that is epistemologically *irreducible* to an outside observer's knowledge of the aspect of brain functioning that these conscious experiences are entirely ontologically reducible to. If our thoughts, feelings, and sensations are in the brain but cannot be observed there by an outside observer and are so different from what can be observed there that we cannot even imagine them ever being observed there, this conclusion seems inescapable. It must be the case that our conscious experiences entail knowledge content that is epistemologically *irreducible* to an outside observer's knowledge of the aspect of brain functioning that these conscious experiences are entirely ontologically reducible to. Indeed, it is hard to argue the opposite case, for how could the external observer's outside view of fleshy brain matter, firing neurons, and electrochemical brain activity possibly encompass knowledge of pleasurable sensations, uncharitable thoughts, or direct experience of what blueness, sourness, or roughness is like? It seems clear that this is impossible, strongly suggesting that

our conscious experiences are not only entirely ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning but also entail knowledge content that is epistemologically *irreducible* to the outside observer's knowledge of that aspect of brain functioning. It seems clear that they are that aspect of brain functioning known in a more direct way and that, in consequence, they encompass knowledge content that is not knowable by an external observer who only knows them in a more indirect way.

## [6] Ontologically Reducible but Epistemologically Irreducible

*An Unlikely Combination of Characteristics?*

On first sight, this seems an unlikely combination of characteristics. If a conscious experience is the same thing as some aspect of brain functioning – if what is known by the internal and external observer is exactly the same thing, ontologically speaking – how can the internal observer know something of it not known to the external observer?

In fact, this not only can be true where conscious experiences are concerned; there is a case for claiming that it must be, and so is true. We shall see below that there are reasonable grounds for holding that conscious experiences are, in fact, both ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning and epistemologically irreducible to the external observer's knowledge of that aspect of brain functioning.

This combination of characteristics appears problematic because the claim of ontological reducibility essentially asserts that there is no part of the inner view that is not encompassed within the same underlying reality as is known by the external observer. This appears to mean that, given an entirely complete and accurate external observer's view of the underlying reality in question, there should be no aspect of the reality that the inner view is entirely subsumed within that is not able to be known by the external observer. It seems to suggest that nothing can be known to the inside observer that is not also encompassed within the reality known to the external observer.

But how can the inner observer's view of a conscious experience be epistemologically irreducible to the external observer's view of it when the inner view that is the conscious experience is ontologically reducible to the reality that underlies it and is fully reflected within it? If every aspect of what is known by the inside observer is subsumed

within the reality known to the external observer, then a complete external observer's knowledge of the reality must, on the face of it, encompass a knowledge of all of it. Surely this means that the directly experienced inner view cannot be epistemologically irreducible to the outer view?

*An Irreconcilable Difference in Perspectives*

The suggestion here is that the solution to this apparent difficulty lies in the possibility that, while a complete external observer's knowledge of the reality does encompass a knowledge of all of it, it does so in a different form. The inner view is epistemologically irreducible because something is lost in translation when switching from the internal observer's form to the external observer's form – something trivial in terms of information content but significant nonetheless. The suggestion, in short, is that the epistemological irreducibility is a function not of ontological differences but of an irreconcilable difference in perspectives.

*Most of What we Know is Known Relationally*

Seeing how this is possible requires a return to the idea of relational and nonrelational knowing explored in Chapter 12.

As was argued there, almost everything we know of ourselves and the world at large is relational in nature; the thing known is known indirectly in relation to other things.

This is true of the whole of our view of the world and of the human animal known externally. The sun we see and feel cannot be the sun as such; it can only be the sun known *in relation to* our sensory systems; we know it via the visual and other data transmitted from it and the images and feelings we construct from that data. Even the sun understood in more scientific terms – via verbally and mathematically expressed theories and models – is known relationally in this way. We know it not as itself but *via* those theories and models.

Indeed, since much of science is constructed by observing how things behave in particular physical circumstances – that is to say, by observing their behaviour in relation to other things in the physical world – this indirect and relational tag applies for a second reason. It applies not just because our theories and models sit between us and the sun itself, but because the detailed content of these theories and

models is itself indirect and relational in nature. It tells us not what the sun is in itself but rather what it is in relation to planets, moons, photons, gravity, and so on. The same is true of everything else we know as external observers – of atoms, electrons, trees, brains and their various parts, and so on – they are all known indirectly and relationally.

*Experiences Also Known Nonrelationally*

As was also argued in Chapter 12, the situation as regards our inner experiences – the panorama of consciousness – is similar, but not the same. Most of what we know of conscious experience is also indirect and relational in nature, but some of it is direct and nonrelational. When we experience ourselves in particular ways – swimming in the sun, dreaming of a red balloon, feeling a pleasant sensation – there is a sense in which we know the inner experiential view, not directly *of itself* but indirectly *in relation to* these various experiential circumstances. We know it through its relationships with other things, which is to say, indirectly. We know it as sweetness when we taste sugar, blueness when we see a clear sky, and so on. As with our knowledge of the external world, there is relational knowledge content – it is sweet as opposed to orange, sharp, or sour.

What is different is the way in which we know this relational knowledge content. If the Chapter 12 arguments are sound, we must accept that our inner experiences are the one thing we can and must know, not just relationally and indirectly but also nonrelationally and directly. We can and must know them directly, not just through their relationships to other things, but directly as themselves and in relation to nothing but themselves. Taking a contrary view leads us into a nonsensical infinite regress where one way of knowing must be known via another way of knowing, that way of knowing must be known via another, and so on ad infinitum. We know them 'as is' without any mediating factor to introduce a relational element.

If we ask ourselves the question, 'How do we know knowing?', there are only two possible answers. Either we know any given way of knowing via another, in which case we must ask how we know that way of knowing (and the one we know that through and the one we know that through), ad infinitum, or we know it directly by being it. Either we assume the knower and the known are in some sense

separate and need to be linked by another (and another and another) way of knowing, in which case we are led into the infinite regress just described. Or we assume that the knower and the known in this case are one thing, and the knowing is known directly – which is to say, nonrelationally, as, or in terms of, itself. Our knowledge of our conscious experience is also largely relational in nature, but not wholly so. All of the relational content it entails is itself known directly and nonrelationally.

We do not just know the relationship as sweet or sour; we know what sweetness, sourness – and even what was labelled in Chapter 12 as empty consciousness itself – are *like* as direct, unmediated experiences. In a sense, we know the relationship by being it; it is a direct part of what we are, of how we experience ourselves. It is, in essence, our experience of ourselves – or, at any rate, one particular aspect of our experience of ourselves.

*Ontologically Reducible and Epistemologically Irreducible*

And this, of course, tells us how it is possible for our panorama of inner experiences to be very different from the external observer's view yet both ontologically reducible to the reality that underlies that external observer's view and epistemologically irreducible to the external view itself. The three elements of this position seem irreconcilable. It is hard to see how it can be true that the internal view is ontologically reducible to the reality that underlies the external observer's view if the internal view is also very different from the external observer's view itself. Ontological reducibility seems to imply epistemological reducibility, but epistemological reducibility seems to be impossible if the two ways of knowing are so very different – the two being very different implies epistemological irreducibility, but this, in turn, seems to imply ontological irreducibility. How can the inner way of knowing be very different to and epistemologically irreducible to the external way of knowing if it is entirely reducible to the same reality entirely known via the external way of knowing?

*The Relational Cannot Encompass the Nonrelational*

The answer is that the external observer knows the reality in question completely – as completely as an external observer knows anything

studied by science – but only in the same relational terms as anything studied by science. The external observer knows the whole of the substance that is our conscious experience, but only in terms of a type of knowledge that cannot, by its very (relational) nature, encompass the nonrelational aspects of conscious experience. Everything of the inner view is subsumed within the reality underlying the external view and is therefore also known within the external observer's view, but it is known in a different way or in a different form. The inner view seems very different and is irreducible because it entails direct and nonrelational knowledge of the reality that subsumes it that is not and cannot be encompassed in the external observer's indirect and relational knowledge and experience of the same reality.

To put it more precisely, the same relationships are known, but they are known in a direct, nonrelational way. We know not just the relationships as such but also what it is like to experience them directly and nonrelationally. The external observer knows redness or the experience of sweetness as relationships between aspects of brain function; the internal observer knows the same relationships as direct experiences. He knows what it is like to have that aspect of brain functioning occur – what experiencing redness and sweetness is like.

Since these inner experiences are entirely subsumed within the substance of the aspect of brain functioning observed by the external observer, the external view encompasses everything about them in relational form. It encompasses everything about them that scientists would normally know about the things they study, including a *relational* knowledge of the nonrelational experiences of redness and sweetness. It is thus entirely possible for the inner view to be very different to the external view and entirely ontologically reducible to the reality underlying the external view because nothing is known in either view that is not known *in some form* in the other. But it is also entirely possible for the inner perspective to be epistemologically irreducible to the knowledge content of the external perspective.

*Lost in Translation*

It is entirely possible because, while both the substance and the nature of the nonrelational 'like something' qualities of conscious experience are encompassed within the external perspective, they can only be known relationally by an outside observer, so that the nonrelational

aspect is essentially lost. The nonrelational 'like something' qualities of conscious experience are encompassed within the external perspective but not *as* the nonrelational 'like something' qualities of conscious experience – that aspect of their nature is lost, although it is encompassed in a different form. The external observer knows it from the outside in a purely relational way. It sits beyond his experience of the brain as a reality underlying his experience, a reality that the external observer can only know relationally – *via* and in relation to his external experience of it – but cannot know directly and nonrelationally while taking the external observer's perspective. The notion that our conscious experiences can be both ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning and epistemologically *irreducible* to the external observer's view of that aspect of brain functioning is an entirely reasonable one because the epistemological irreducibility is purely perspectival and has no ontological implications.

*A View of Conscious Experience That can and Must be True*

We can take this argument a little further, however. As was asserted earlier, we can claim reasonable grounds for holding that this view of conscious experience not only can be true but must be and is true.

There are two points here.

The first is that conscious experience must be inside the actual brain underlying the experienced brain – where else can it be? It cannot be observed there, however, and it is so different to what we can observe there that we cannot even imagine how it could be observed there. From a scientific perspective, this means it can only be accepted as being there if, at minimum, it is nothing over and above – entirely ontologically reducible to – something that can be observed there (ontological reducibility is a necessary condition but not, in itself, a sufficient one). If our conscious experiences are inside our brains, as most of us assume, they must be ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning that an outside observer experiences in an entirely different way.

The second is that we can make a similar claim as regards epistemological irreducibility. If the case argued in Chapter 12 is sound, each of our conscious experiences is known directly and nonrelationally. If the case argued in the present chapter is sound,

nonrelational knowledge cannot be encompassed *as nonrelational knowledge* within an external observer's knowledge of the human organism, since this is entirely relational.

On this basis, we can claim reasonable grounds for holding that it not only can be, but must be, and is true that our conscious experiences are both ontologically reducible to some functioning brain state and epistemologically *irreducible* to the external observer's view of that functioning brain state. It is reasonable to conclude that the view of conscious experience drawn out above – the view drawn out by recognising and correcting the flaw in the assumption that the flesh, blood, and brain view of humans is *the* reality of who and what we are – is correct in these two respects.

This, at any rate, is the view taken here and is the basis for the claims made in the next chapter as to the form a scientific account of conscious experience must take and the implications of this for both science and the transcendent perspective itself.

**Summary: A Perspective With no Explanatory gap**

Recognising that the flesh, blood, and brain view is not the all-encompassing reality of the human organism but rather a scientifically accurate external observer's perspective on the substance of that reality suggests a view of conscious experience that has two facets. The first being that conscious experience is ontologically reducible to some aspect of brain functioning – nothing over and above it in terms of substance. The second being that it is also, for purely perspectival reasons, epistemologically irreducible to the outside observer's knowledge of that aspect of brain functioning, with this epistemologically irreducible knowledge content nevertheless being ontologically reducible to the aspect of brain functioning in question.

This is significant because it suggests a view of consciousness and conscious experience in which neither the position suggested by Chalmers nor the position suggested by Dennett is quite accurate. It suggests a perspective in which there is no explanatory gap and the problem of conscious experience is not so uniquely hard that we must add experience to our list of fundamental properties alongside mass, charge, and space-time, as Chalmers has suggested. But also one in which Dennett's notion – that conscious experience is so entirely reducible to states in the brain that it will essentially disappear entirely

from our view of the nature of things once science has solved all of the 'easy' problems relating to the brain – is not true either. It suggests a view that lies somewhere between the positions taken by these thinkers. These points are explored further in the next chapter.

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