

The Illusion Problem: a brief introduction and defense of Keith Frankish’s illusionist theory¹

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“To convert a position from crazy to merely bizarre might be the highest form of academic success” (Schwitzgebel, 2014).

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Introduction

The mind-body problem is widely known and disseminated in the philosophy of mind. With it, it is intended to answer (in general terms) whether or not the mind is part of the physical body. Most proposed answers throughout this debate have followed two perspectives: physicalism⁴ or dualism. Essentially, the first one claims the mind is part of or composed of the physical body, and the latter claims that the mind and body are distinct substances or properties (Blackmore, 2018, p. 15). In this regard, it is undeniable that the dualist perspective has proven to be the most popular alternative. Besides being firmly rooted in Western culture (Carruthers, 2020, p. 199–204), it is probably the most common philosophical basis for the vast majority of people, considering the “universality” of certain biases in our intuitions about consciousness and in our characteristic use of language to describe psychological processes (See Fiala, 2012), in addition to the (debatable) difficulties of science in explaining consciousness.

Such difficulties were specifically elucidated by philosopher David Chalmers (1995), who introduced the “Easy Problems” and the “Hard Problem” of consciousness. According to the author, the Easy Problems concern what can be explained currently or in the future by science, while the Hard Problem consists of questioning how and why conscious brain processes generate phenomenal experience, something that would be inexplicable by science. Over the past three decades, these questions have spread to almost all fields of knowledge about the mind, generating great (and relevant) repercussions both in philosophy of mind and in neurosciences, biological and cognitive sciences. It is worth noting that, perhaps because of the exposure and generalization of this dichotomy that consciousness studies gained a new and necessary stimulus for their development, rescuing and adapting concepts, theories, and methods arising from scientific-cognitive, anthropological, and philosophical disciplines throughout their academic growth.⁵

With this scenario of integration in mind, a good starting point for our text would be, for example, to point out that contemporary anthropological and psychological studies have been showing that the influence of folk psychology⁶ in our daily lives tends to facilitate a

⁴ Here, we will not distinguish between "physicalism" and "materialism", using these terms interchangeably.

⁵ Regarding Chalmer's historical influence on studies about consciousness, maybe we can observe the existence of an academic phenomenon similar to what Lau and Michel call "the guru effect" (See Lau & Michel, 2019).

⁶ In philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences, the term “folk psychology” or “common sense psychology” refers to the natural human ability of intuitively explain and predict the behavior and mental states of individuals around us (See Ravenscroft, 2016).

plausibility and acceptance of dualistic intuitions (making them "obvious") (See Sellars, 1963). Hence, that would make physicalist arguments seem "incomplete" or even counterintuitive (Carruthers, 2020, p. 202; See Fiala, 2012). On the other hand, despite the historical appeal that phenomenal experiences would be scientifically inexplicable processes, most of contemporary empirical experiences about consciousness have converged towards similar and/or reconcilable conclusions. Something that, in itself, could imply that we are progressively closer to a resolution or significant paradigm changes regarding our conscious experiences (See Graziano, et. al, 2020).

This debate could perhaps be better contextualized by rescuing the distinction between "manifest image" and "scientific image" of the world, developed by the philosopher Wilfrid Sellars in his *Philosophy and the scientific image of man* (1963). In it, the manifest image is described as our everyday world as it appears to us and it is daily experienced: with objects, colors, smells, tastes, sounds, etc. Furthermore, it would also consist of our intangible products, such as cultures, beliefs, thoughts, languages, and free will. Scientific image of the world is the one beyond the human perspective, containing quarks, electrons, atoms, molecules, etc. (See Dennett, 2013). The set of conceptions of the scientific image naturally has its origins in the manifest image of technicians and scientists, although it is considerably different from its genitor. For Sellars, most of the main aspects of the scientific image tend to be culturally developed and actively learned by each individual, while the manifest image is practically all intuitive and naturally built by human beings – so that, even with our cognitive-biological limitations and configurations, we manage to survive and assimilate the world we live in.⁷

As mentioned by numerous philosophers influenced by this Sellarian reasoning, history of science has been marked by the difficulties involved in establishing a proper stereoscopic communication between both images of the world – something that, consequently, has been responsible for generating and feeding an entire academic scenario of persistent theoretical-methodological confusions, particularly regarding philosophical issues and their debates with the sciences (See Sellars, 1963; Churchland, 1986; Dennett, 2013; Pigliucci, 2020). And,

⁷ To illustrate, we might ask whether rigid objects, such as walls, would be completely solid. According to our manifest image, the most obvious answer would be "yes", since we can't get through them and any interaction we may have with a wall tends to prove to us that it is a solid object. However, from the point of view of physics, walls are nothing more than specific clusters of atoms, which consist of spatially empty connections. Therefore, from a scientific image of the world, there would be no possibility of attributing, coherently, the characteristic of solidity to those clusters that, in the manifest image, are called walls.

assuming our natural predilection for the manifest image of the world, many of the contemporary consciousness theories would merely be based on manipulations of folk psychology intuitions, considering the counter-intuitiveness and complexities of the scientific image of the world. (See Woundenberg, Peels, Rider, 2020).

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the role of science and philosophy has always involved the discussion, exploration, and development of complex and counterintuitive issues, precisely because they are (quite possibly) what bring us closer to the best explanations about how the world works. Until a few centuries ago, for instance, it was counterintuitive to say that the Earth was not the center of the Universe. Later, it was counterintuitive to talk about quantum mechanisms. Nowadays, even with considerable neuroscientific, cognitive-scientific, and behavioral advances, it is still counterintuitive to say that consciousness would be (only) a set of brain processes and bodily interactions.⁸ That being said, perhaps the academic difficulty in accepting this latter point rests on the fact that consciousness apparently concerns ourselves and a whole alleged personal, private, and introspective universe (Carruthers, 2020, p. 198).

In a way, something similar would have already happened in the history of ideas. Throughout most of ancient times and into modern days, debates about the morphogenesis and increasing complexity in the biological world commonly brought an “illusion” that the transformation of inorganic matter into life implied the existence of some kind of divine breath, an *élan vital* that would give life and movement to bodies. The separation between the living world and the material world was, then, an ontological one. The great father of modern dualism, René Descartes, was one of those who “buried” that distinction when he proposed a separation of the world into just two substances, placing all the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms in the same ontological scope and leaving only the human mind apart. However, such ontological unification was severely questioned by intellectuals of his time and was only accepted centuries later, when progress in chemical sciences showed that living processes were actually only physicochemical processes. At that moment, the manifest intuition that the living world needed its own ontology became obsolete.

Therefore, given the aforementioned historical complexities and examples, we believe to be sensible to infer that, if philosophers and scientists choose to refuse to (at least) question themselves about obvious/intuitive prepositions only because they are certain that these are obvious/intuitive to them, maybe they shouldn't be taken seriously as philosophers (Leal-

⁸ In fact, perhaps such a statement is counterintuitive only for certain philosophers, considering (as we mentioned) that modern science tends to ignore the insurmountable of this question and common sense does not even seem to know its existence (Dennett, 2019, p. 54; See Díaz, 2021).

Toledo, 2018, p.101). Following a similar reasoning about such issues, in 2018, Chalmers clarified that maybe it is the case to ask ourselves why, after all, we think there is a Hard Problem. The introduction of a Metaproblem to philosophical debates about consciousness attempts to align them with the current landscape of experimental psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, cognitive sciences, and even artificial intelligence, in an attempt to seriously and empirically study the topic (Chalmers, 2018, p. 10-11). However (and as we will develop shortly), the formulation of the Metaproblem of consciousness provided by Chalmers turns out to be influenced by folk psychology intuitions, which seem to prevent him from having a proper position in his own argument.

Indeed, it is within this context and with Sellarians assumptions in mind that, with this chapter, we intend to introduce what we believe to be a “closer” and more sensitive variation of the Metaproblem of consciousness, structured by philosopher Keith Frankish (2017): the Illusion Problem. To do so, we will explore the process that leads us to treat each and every *quale* as an illusion, in addition to showing how *qualia* are present in most supposedly physicalist theories, which we will later call “Closeted Dualism”. We will also emphasize that the illusionist theory is already widely used or considered by philosophers who seek a scientifically plausible way out of the problems of consciousness. Once done, the reader will be ready for the more “technical” part of this article, in which we will explore and defend the main concepts and mechanisms of Illusionism.

The *qualia* deflation

In a nutshell, Frankish's line of thought so-called Illusionism⁹, transforms Chalmers' Hard Problem (i.e., why and how do some of our brain processes come with first-person phenomenal experiences?) into the (Hard) Problem of Illusion, namely, why would we have the illusion that there is a Hard Problem of consciousness (Frankish, 2017)?¹⁰ Indeed, it is a complex issue, but by no means intractable. By adopting an illusionist perspective, we would only have to explain what kind of physical mechanisms¹¹ and neural processing create the intuition that there is an explanatory gap between the way the physical world works and the way we judge our internal states and processes.

According to Illusionism, such intuition would be responsible for one's very judgement that phenomenality exists. And, by treating it as an illusion, illusionists do not intend to simply discard it, since illusions are real phenomena with considerable powers (Frankish, 2017, p. 12). After all, when we experience an optical illusion, even if it is fully explained to us, we will still continue to experience it. But once explained, we understand that this phenomenon is nothing more than a visual illusion. If the same is done with the phenomenality of our experiences, then a "solution to the Meta-problem of consciousness will itself solve or dissolve the Hard Problem" (Chalmers, 2018, p. 8).

However, this argument may generate an immediate questioning; because, if we are going to explain consciousness without appealing to problematic properties from a physical point of view, why start from such an extreme¹² position of the physicalist spectrum? In the physicalist spectrum there are several intermediate solutions that don't imply the abandonment of what seems to us a datum of experience (or rather, which seems to us *the very* datum of experience). By the way, the search for less radical physicalist solutions is basically what philosophy of mind has been doing in recent decades.

⁹ The article Quinning Qualia (Dennett, 1988) can be considered a milestone in the history of what would later be called Illusionism. It is a philosophical argument about consciousness and cognition that has existed for more than three decades, but whose denomination is relatively recent (See Frankish, 2017).

¹⁰ See Note 5 for a criticism that, perhaps, this "illusion" only affects a small portion of the academic population.

¹¹ The Problem of Illusion tended to develop itself around neurocentral language, however, the latest developments in cognitive sciences have led its main proponents to extend their insights to embodied notions of cognition (See Dennett, 2015; Frankish, 2019).

¹² Here, such an allegation shows that the illusionist position, which correspond to that of the authors, is at one end of the physicalist spectrum, having even been called Strict Physicalism by one of them (See Leal-Toledo, 2019). Worth noting that in a 2013 survey conducted in PhilPapers, 56.5% of participating philosophers identified themselves as physicalists, and 27.1% as non-physicalists (Bourget, Chalmers, 2013 p. 477).

In his text *Quining Diet Qualia* (2012), Frankish further explored this preference that determines most physicalist theories, arguing that they adopt a process of semantic deflation of the subjective and qualitative properties of conscious experience – that is, what we call “*qualia*” – so that they can deal with consciousness “empirically”, without excluding what many consider the crucial point in their analysis: its phenomenal character. So that we can understand the mechanisms of this process, Frankish delimited three types of *qualia* in the philosophical literature: (1) classic *qualia*, characterized as ineffable, radically private, intrinsic and whose access would be direct and infallible; (2) diet *qualia*, similar to the previous one, but with fewer classic characteristics (particularly the infallibility in our access); and (3) zero *qualia*, which are quasi-phenomenal physical properties.

The first point made by Frankish in this exploratory process is that, currently, nobody or almost nobody defends the existence of the classic *qualia* (including even dualists like Chalmers, as we will see shortly). Instead, the classic *qualia* seem to have been deflated little by little in order to adapt to physicalist theories, becoming the diet *qualia* and, consequently, generating what is conventionally called “Type-B Materialism”¹³ and “Type-C Materialism”¹⁴. Some of the properties that made *qualia* a “mysterious entity” fell into disuse, so that they could adapt to what was believed to be a “more” physicalist view of the world. However, Frankish considers that intermediate explanations – that is, located in the middle of the physicalist spectrum¹⁵ - usually fall short of what they want to explain. For no matter how these explanations elucidate the emergence or nature of consciousness (what they take as a datum), it is always possible to show that the processes explained by physicalists could easily function without the presence of any phenomenal character. In a way, Chalmers had already pointed out something similar in 1996, when he argued that it was common among physicalists to claim to have found the solution to the Hard Problem, but merely solve one of the Easy Problems.

Therefore, wouldn't it be necessary to migrate from classic *qualia* directly to zero *qualia* – that is, to follow the illusionist option? Although such a resolution may seem attractive, it would bring an obvious question: what would remain of our phenomenality if we removed its

¹³ Type-B materialist perspectives argue that consciousness is not logically supervenient to the body/brain, defending that there are no *a priori* implications from the physical to the phenomenal, but claiming to remain physicalist nonetheless (Chalmers, 1996, p.166).

¹⁴ Type-C materialist perspectives deny both logical supervenience and physicalism (Chalmers, 1996, p.166). This position refers to what is called property dualism, which we believe is best classified as a type of dualism.

¹⁵ Within the physicalist spectrum, we understand that Type-A Materialism would be located at one extreme and Type-C at the other. Therefore, for us, every position between Type-A and Type-C would be “physicalisms in the middle of the spectrum”.

very phenomenal character? Would it be possible to “eat the cake and keep it too”? Unlikely, or, as philosopher Jaegwon Kim would say: “There are no free lunches in philosophy any more than in real life” (Kim, 2000, p. 60). And in fact, perhaps it is because of such argumentative obstacles that, as Frankish seeks to expose, some physicalists choose to carry out a diet/zero shuffle (2012, p.16). Specifically, by trying to deflate classic *qualia* in their promises of an explanation of diet *qualia*, they would end up either eliminating them, or sneakily concealing classic *qualia* back in into their arguments (as we will illustrate shortly). By all accounts, the reason behind that process would be that diet *qualia* do not have any distinctive content, which ends up making them empty concepts. Indeed, Frankish believes that they would only exist because of a (dualist-inspired) hope that someday *qualia* may be found as material data. However, as philosopher Daniel Dennett had already told us in his classic book about consciousness (definitely a milestone in illusionist thinking), trying find what *qualia* are physically made of is like trying to find what Sherlock Holmes or Hamlet are made of (Dennett, 1991, p.71). That is, there is no “fictoplasm” to be found and/or explained.

Similarly, it is like going to a magic show and watching a woman being sawn in half. We could carry out an investigation of how the magic happened. However, what we would find is an explanation of how something that seems to have happened, in reality, did not. If we treat what we saw as a datum, after the show, when we meet the same woman, but whole and without scars, we would deduce that it couldn't be the same person, because the one we saw in the show was sawn in half – and that's a datum (Dennett, 2016, p.67). Therefore, as in the magic show example, *qualia* would not be the datum to be explained, since the true datum to be clarified is the process responsible for creating the illusion that they exist. Once our illusion and our error in judgement are explained, there would no longer be any doubt: there is no explanatory gap to be bridged. The only physicalism to be defended here is, therefore, some Type-A physicalism¹⁶, since there are qualitative residues of experience still unexplained in the explanations provided by other physicalists variations. If clearly presented, they would be nothing more than classic *qualia* “disguised” as diet *qualia*. Next, we will explore two brief thought experiments that can help us make this intuitively clearer:

First experiment: a person wakes up disoriented in the middle of a forest she has never seen before. She is not even able to identify which region of the world she is in. While searching for help, she comes across a cave. Inside this cave, she sees something completely unexpected

¹⁶ Type-A materialist views argue that consciousness, insofar as it exists, logically supersedes the physical, generally for functionalist or eliminativist reasons (Chalmers, 1996, p.165).

and inexplicable: a world inhabited by dinosaurs and mythological beings. However, in this world, she also finds no help. She returns to the forest and, after being completely lost for weeks, faints. Then, she wakes up in a hospital without knowing how many days have passed. She is asked what happened, where she was, and what she saw. She doesn't know where she was, but maintain her memory intact and talks about the mysterious cave she had found. However, without her knowledge, that cave was destroyed by a natural event. There are no more geographic records of it. The only record left is this person's account. Nothing else can be known about such a cave, only this one account.

Second experiment: While you are sleeping, aliens invade Earth and abduct you. In their spaceship, without waking you up and using a technologically inconceivable equipment, they remove your ability to have phenomenal experiences. However, they configure your nervous system in a way that you still judge or believe that you have phenomenal experiences, which, in fact, you no longer experience. Minutes after the abduction, the aliens take you back to your room without a scratch. Next day, you wake up...

Those thought experiments are nothing new in philosophical literature. The second experiment, for instance, is just a reconstruction of a classic article entitled *An Unfortunate Dualist* (see Smullyan, 1981), in which it is narrated that an injection would have removed someone's qualia, but left everything else in their experience functioning normally. The author poses a very simple question: would you notice any difference if you lost your *qualia*, but still judged/believed that you had them? Or, in a more contemporary way, would you notice if you were turned into a philosophical zombie¹⁷? If, based on this experiment, you still believed/judged that you are not a zombie, then by definition, you would not notice that you have lost your *qualia*. If, when looking at a beautiful blue sky, you did not have the phenomenal experience of the “blueness” of the blue, but still judged to be qualitatively experiencing a beautiful blue sky, who could say otherwise? Who could correct you? And if the aliens came back to explain what they did to you, what would change? Despite the initial shock, everything indicates that you would still judge to be experiencing a beautiful blue sky, would still judge pain as a negative sensation and would relate a rare and tasty steak as a positive sensation – in fact, a delicious sensation¹⁸. And, if you are not even able to perceive the absence of your own phenomenal consciousness, what could be missing? Notice that, if aliens were to remove one

¹⁷ This argument was further elaborated in the master's thesis of one of the authors (see Leal-Toledo, 2005) and subsequently developed in two articles resulting from that work (see Teixeira & Leal-Toledo, 2005; Leal-Toledo, 2009).

¹⁸ One of the authors, however, believes that the delicious sensation of a steak is actually found in a well-done piece.

of your arms, but leave your judgment that you still have it (similarly to what we know happens in the case of phantom limbs), perhaps you would not be able to notice the difference, but everyone around you would. However, in the case of consciousness, the situation is different because neither you nor anyone else would be able to notice any difference. After all, the only possible access to your consciousness is your account of it. A conclusion that leads us to the first experiment.

By definition, the only evidence we have of the mysterious lost cave from the first experiment is the account of the person who found it. That person is not able to tell us where the cave was, and, even if she could, it wouldn't make a difference, as it was completely destroyed without a trace (for greater dramatic effect, let's say it was swallowed by the Earth's core). Therefore, our only access to it would be through such a report, but even then, we would still be in a completely different position than we were in the second experiment. In the current example, the fact that we have only one account of the cave is an unfortunate contingency. After all, in more favorable scenarios, the witness could have gotten lost along with a friend that also saw the same cave, could be able to provide directions to the cave, could have photographed it, the cave may not have been destroyed, etc. In other words, it is a contingent fact that our only access to this cave is the report of only one person, even though, in principle, it could be experienced by anyone.

However, that is not the case with consciousness, which can be illustrated by a plot twist with experiment 1: now, after waking up in the hospital, the person is informed that, in fact, she was never lost in a forest. She had never even left the hospital. She was there from the beginning to participate in an experiment on the effects of using psychedelics drugs during sleep. Therefore, everything was a drug-induced dream. Now, what she has to do is report her dreams, and she reports her vivid experience with a mysterious cave. Here, the report would be basically identical to the previous version, with only one crucial difference: the cave was now a dream, and the fact that no one else can observe it is no longer a contingency, but a constitutive feature of the occurrence.

We are faced with a scenario in which we have two identical reports in two completely different situations. In the first case, there could be other evidence of the existence of this cave, but in the second case, there isn't. Even if we had a dream reader device that projected everything that was dreamed onto a movie screen, there would still be an insurmountable phenomenological problem here, because we wouldn't know how the dream is like for the dreamer himself. Thus, to create a dream reader, we would not only have to build a machine that would collect information from the dreamer's brain and translate it into imagistic forms to

project them onto a screen (or in the spectator's mind), but we would also have to know whether the images created by the machine really correspond to what was dreamed. In this case, the only possible solution would be to question the dreamer, since only his report could calibrate such equipment and tell us if it is working properly (Schwitzgebel, 2013, p.80). That is, the only existing access to the dreamed cave is through a report – either from the dreamer or from people with brains that function similarly to the dreamer's and were used to calibrate the dream reader. This wouldn't be the case if the cave were real. In the first experiment, it was, in principle, accessible to everyone. This is why we can say, returning to experiment 2, that if the witness themselves is not capable of perceiving the illusory character of their phenomenal experiences, who else could? Or, if even the bat doesn't know what it's like to be a bat, who will?¹⁹

Through both experiments, we can notice how treacherous the misuse of language can be. As we mentioned before, the ambiguity and imprecision of our popular use of language, based upon manifest images and common sense, can cause various philosophical confusions. Therefore, when we say we “entered inside a cave”, we use the term "inside" with a very different meaning than what we infer when we say "we enter someone's dream (or mind)." The human mind is supposed to be inside the brain, but only in a metaphorical sense, not spatial/literal – if you open up a brain or its neurons, you wouldn't find anything like it. In that case, “inside”, when referring to the mind, is used in a stronger ontological sense, approaching what is currently called Russellian Monism²⁰. This is a problem already pointed out by philosopher Julian Jaynes in 1976, when he suggested that in our analyzes, we reify the idea of mind when we take metaphors too seriously (1976/2000, p. 55). A cave is something we can enter in a literal/spatial sense. The mind is only accessible in a metaphorical sense.

These experiments emphasize what is classic about the diet *qualia*: their privacy, their interiority. The real cave has an interior, but that, although contingently private in this thought experiment, still is ontologically public. Our *qualia*, on the other hand, has something necessarily private. That's why the ability to be wrong about our own *qualia* raises a problem because who would correct us? A physicalist who deflates classical *qualia* to the point of removing their ontological privacy is, in fact, performing diet/zero transformation, that is, defending a type of illusionism. A physicalist who tries to deflate *qualia*, but keeping its

¹⁹ A reference to the classic thought experiment developed by philosopher Thomas Nagel in What is like to be a bat? (1974).

²⁰ We understand that this theory is only consisted in a way of property dualism disguised as monism. We commonly refer to Espinosa's theory of mind as a kind of dualism and, for the same reasons, we believe that we should also refer to Russellian Monism in the same way. Russellian Monism would be what Chalmers calls Type-C Materialism.

ontological interiority, has not truly deflated anything, and can be considered a “Closeted Dualist”.

The Closeted Dualist

What these thought experiments aim to elucidate is precisely the same intuition that underlies Frankish's analysis - that the distinction between classic and diet *qualia* is illusory, as is the assumption that the Hard Problem could be solved by solving some of the Easy Problems. Such strategies do not achieve any explanatory progress because they ask the wrong question, or in other words, they start from the wrong assumption. Any physicalist attempts to deflate classic *qualia* in order to then explain diet *qualia* is doomed to fail, precisely because what makes *qualia qualia* is their phenomenal classic aspect, their interiority. Therefore, the very existence of diet *qualia* is incoherent. If the concept of consciousness – which in this perspective is understood as a first-person phenomenal experience – is to be treated as the datum to be explained, it cannot be deflated, since by doing so, one loses exactly what one wants to explain: its experiential/phenomenal/private character. Traditionally, the distinctive and special character of the way we became aware of phenomenal consciousness would be through an acquaintance process (knowledge by contact)²¹. As we saw in experiment one, the difference between the cave report and the dream report about the cave is precisely that external access to the dream will always need to pass, in some way, through the first-person report. In the case of the real cave, the fact that all that's left to us is a report is just a contingency.

Given this scenario, we can call those physicalists who do not fit into Type-A as Closeted Dualists because, in attempting to preserve the phenomenal character responsible for creating the explanatory gap, they end up, almost by magic, concealing the intrinsic dualism of such a property. Frequently done by taking advantage of the vagueness and ambiguity of certain terms that can have connotations that are both physicalist and dualist, such as “representation”, “supervenience” and “appearance”. As philosopher Eric Schwitzgebel (2013) said, “materialists are typically vague about where bizarre things comes from”. We can say they build true conceptual “Trojan Horses” to hide their classic *qualia*.

The term “Closeted Dualism” actually comes from a publication Chalmers made on his official website, in 2015, titled *Jaegwon Kim Comes Out*, in which he said it was “especially notable the fact that Kim, often seen as an arch-reductionist, comes out of the closet as a dualist”²². The obviously ironic tone in Chalmers’ text referred to the fact that Kim, a radical

²¹ Acquaintance would be a "special relationship where the existence and nature of consciousness are given to us as something close to certain" (Goff, 2017, p. 92). It is a term with no easy translation into Portuguese and this, in itself, should at least raise doubts if the complexity of this description is not just an idiosyncrasy of the English language.

²² A term also inspired by Julian Jaynes, who called some self-proclaimed materialist "frustrated dualists" (Jaynes, 2000, p. 12).

reductionist, had “flirted” with dualism in the last pages of one of his books, appropriately titled *Physicalism, or Something near enough* (2005). In it, after elaborating a reductionist analysis of the mind, Kim admits that there is still a remnant to be explained, which would precisely be the phenomenal character of our conscious experiences. This remnant is its interiority, the fact that we know it “from the inside” in a way that only those who have the experience could know.

Here we have an example of how a resolution to the Hard Problem of Consciousness ends up falling into the problem of Leibniz's Mill, by seeking a physical explanation that tries to maintain phenomenality - a thought experiment that aims to explain how perception could not be understood mechanically. Once again, if phenomenal consciousness is treated as a datum, no matter what physicalist explanation is provided it will be unsatisfactory, as there will always be a phenomenal remnant to be explained. In fact, this phenomenal remnant can be understood as the very popular definition of consciousness (Frankish, 2017, p.25), since it is normally defined in opposition to the physical properties and characteristics of the world. It is what a zombie physically identical to us would not have; it is what scientist Mary would not know about red, even if she knew everything physical about colors; it is the only thing we could not know about bats, even if we had its complete physical description. It is what supposedly could not be functionally explained, divided, weighed, or merely described and externally accessed.

The Chalmers Impasse

As the debate about *qualia* has been presented so far, we are faced with two manifestly counterintuitive physicalist positions: one eliminates phenomenal consciousness, which seems to be precisely the datum to be explained, and, therefore, appears to deviate from an adequate explanation; and the other maintains it, with its deflated properties or not, but fails to fit its phenomenology into the physical world – treating it, in its explanations, as an unexplained remnant or hiding it within a conceptual trojan horse. The position in conflict with those two would be some kind of strong dualism, which also brings its own counterintuitive implications: either we are left with an epiphenomenal mind that causes nothing physical, or we need to explain how something non-physical causes something physical. Not to mention the need to describe what is deemed non-physical in its own terms and not just through a denial of physical properties and functionalities. Apparently, this is why Chalmers was able to conclude in his text that none of the presented physicalist explanation models would provide a satisfactory answer to the criticism of being intuitively absurd (Chalmers, 2018).

Similar to Chalmer's conclusion, Schwitzgebel (2014) argues that the metaphysics of the mind is *Crazy*. In his definition, something is bizarre if it goes against our common-sense intuitions, so we are not justified in accepting its assertion without convincing evidence. Also, something is crazy if it is bizarre, and we are not epistemically compelled to believe its claim. Thus, *Crazyism* would be the description of a context in which something crazy is among the central truths of a particular theory. That is, the metaphysics of mind would have, within its central truths, something that (in our common-sense) appears implausible, unacceptable, and epistemically unconvincing. Still, *Crazyism* would not only refer to the metaphysics of mind, as Schwitzgebel proposes that something similar would happen with all metaphysics regarding deep philosophical questions²³. However, unlike topics such as free will, in which the central claims of theories also violate our intuitions, the illusionist position on consciousness seems to touch a much more intimate wound. After all, despite its problems, Illusionism regarding free will (that is, the idea that free will is an illusion) is at least an accepted position as part of the debate. This is not the case in internal discussions in the philosophy of mind (Talbot, 2012).

²³ Something with which we agree, being the reason why we defend it, throughout this article, that our common-sense intuitions (based on our manifest mage) have a negative role in the analysis of such issues.

Given these observations, it is curious that Chalmers has used a Moorian-type²⁴ argument in his formulation of the Metraproblem of consciousness, which simply asserts that conscious experiences exist and that it would be ridiculous to question such existence – that is, an appeal to common-sense intuitions. This position is also used by many physicalists to refute illusionists and justify their withdrawal from the debate. By the way, this goes against one of the illusionists’ battlefronts, which precisely tries to raise the question of our “intuitions of obviousness” – more specifically, about how correct we are regarding our own internal states and abilities to introspect. It is possible to empirically demonstrate that both Chalmers and many of the physicalists in the middle of the spectrum fall into what we can call Naïve Psychological Realism²⁵, which is a form of realism still little explored and questioned – a curious caveat, given that, with the exception of Moore, naïve realism about the external world tends to be highly mocked. Why, then, does realism about the internal world not seem to receive the same critical attention as realism about the external world?

On the other hand, something that philosophers such as James Tartaglia, Frankish, Kim, Dennett (2017, p. 237) and even Chalmers agree is that there is a real problem with positions in the middle of the spectrum in this debate. That is, positions that try to eat the cake and keep it too. The diet *qualia* cake²⁶. But as the famous saying goes: “there is nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos”. And it is in this context that the aforementioned battlefront questioning the “obviousness” of intuitions about our internal states has received significant support in recent years²⁷ – both conceptually, as is the case with Illusionism, and especially experimentally, as an increasing number of results from psychology, neuroscience and experimental philosophy²⁸ results are indicating. To illustrate, we can briefly highlight that, in addition to the conceptual support of Frankish’s illusionist theory, philosopher Alva Nöe (2002) structured the concept of the “Grand Illusion” in his defense that the human

²⁴ Namely, the exact argument is: "People sometimes feel pain; if strong illusionism is true, no one feels pain; (therefore) strong illusionism is false"

²⁵ A term that emerged and was better developed at Leal-Toledo in 2018.

²⁶ With a terrible taste, as expected of a diet cake.

²⁷ Skepticism regarding the obviousness of our internal states and introspection capacity has been discussed in different articles and received different names. In the dissertation of one of the authors, it was called “Problem of My Mind” (Leal-Toledo, 2005). In a previously mentioned article of the same author, it was called Naïve Psychological Realism (2018). Philosopher Georges Rey calls it “First Person Skepticism”. (2017, p. 222). Finally, Alva Nöe names it “New Skepticism” or “Grand Illusion” (2002). However, we believe that no one has worked the subject better than Schwitzgebel (2008, 2013).

²⁸ Front in which one of us fights, at the exact moment he writes this article, in a post-doctoral program supervised by Chalmers and Frankish, while the other author works on the theme in correlation with a neuroscientific theoretical framework in her master’s thesis at São Paulo University, under the guidance of Professor Oswald Pessoa. These are perhaps the first two works on Illusionism in our country.

visual field is not so detailed and clear as we think it is. As experimental support, in addition to the vast scientific literature on our sensory apparatus, behavior, and biases, the empirical work discussed by Schwitzgebel (2008; 2013) shows how our judgements about our conscious states varies and how we are systematically wrong about them. Therefore, contrary to what is admitted by most physicalists in the middle of the spectrum, errors about our introspective judgements would not be rare, peripheral, or pathological. In fact, Chalmers himself admits, citing Nöe and the evidence that we are systematically wrong regarding our judgements about the details of our visual field, that some form of weak Illusionism about consciousness must be true (Chalmers, 2018). However (and unlike what Schwitzgebel pointed out), he does not go so far as to claim we know through our perceptual apparatus the properties we observe of the external world much more securely than we come to know our own phenomenology through introspection.

Nevertheless, even though it may seem contradictory, Schwitzgebel cannot be considered an illusionist about consciousness, since he defends the existence of phenomenal experiences (2017). Additionally, we know that Chalmers claimed that, if he were to accept a properly materialist perspective, it would be some form of strong Illusionism, a theory for which he appears to have much greater sympathy than for most other forms of materialism. In his view, strong Illusionism is the kind of physicalism that seems to deal best with the issue of consciousness, in which “it is denied that people feel something like pain, at least in any sense that implies the existence of an experience of pain. [...] At best, people *undergo* processes of pain, and register them, but they do not experience pain and they do not feel pain”, at least not phenomenologically (Chalmers, 2018, p. 53). For illusionists, then, the question about consciousness is much easier to answer than the Hard Problem, since the recording of stimulus, its evaluation and the resulting change in disposition is all that needs to be explained. This assertion can already be found in his classic 1996 book, in which Chalmers states that Dennettian physicalism would be the one that comes closest to a physicalist position he would be willing to accept, if not for the fact that this perspective “does not take consciousness seriously” (p. 149) – in other words, if it did not treat phenomenal consciousness as a datum that cannot be eliminated. In any case, given everything presented here and the technical clarifications we will turn to in the remainder of this chapter, we are optimistic that Chalmers will eventually “come out of the closet” as another illusionist.

The Illusion Problem

But how would the illusionist argumentation against the phenomenality of consciousness play out in greater detail? To Frankish, a possible reason for us to think that we have phenomenal experiences is that we would have the illusion of being phenomenally conscious. Starting from the scientific image of the world, his perspective and that of other illusionist theorists (including ourselves here) argue that our experiences and perceptions do not possess any phenomenal properties or sensations, both physical and non-physical. Therefore, when analyzing consciousness, the philosopher's task would be to explain the illusory "representations" of phenomenality, not phenomenality itself, which, as we introduced earlier, ends up implying the replacement of the Hard Problem (why phenomenal experiences emerge from brain processes) with the Illusion Problem (why we think there is phenomenality in our experiences and brain processes) (Frankish, 2017, p. 17).

We have seen that, at first glance, it may seem ridiculous to say that our phenomenal sensations and experiences do not exist. However, illusionists do not defend the elimination of conscious experience itself, as they argue that it consists of a set of informational reactions and sensitivities whose results are judged and experienced in our manifest image as something qualitative. In reality, what they conceptualize as illusion is the *nature*, in the scientific image, of these processes – the belief that they would be *qualia*. Therefore, the illusionist perspective should not be seen as an attempt to deny or eliminate the obvious, but rather as the main candidate for a standard perspective of theory of consciousness (Dennett, 2016, p. 68), simply because it discards the possibility of there being a fully inaccessible part of consciousness – whose existence is based on philosophical intuitions grounded in common sense – so that it becomes possible to explore it empirically in its entirety.

In Sellarsian terms, Illusionism seeks to understand consciousness according to the scientific image of the world and "translate" its functioning into the manifest image (unlike other more traditionally accepted theories, which tend to merge or replace aspects of one image for those of the other, seeking, for example, to find *qualia* in our neural circuits). However, as developed above, is it really necessary to discard ideas that have been so well-established (intuitively) in our philosophy of mind to solve the problems of consciousness and make progress with studies on the subject? To answer this question affirmatively, it is necessary to show why Illusionism should be the standard theory of consciousness.

Ever since Cartesian dualism was established, philosophers have been debating why we experience consciousness. However, there was never been any consensus on the matter. Why?

Most likely because the ones who remained in the dualist paradigm used the explanatory gap between Easy Problems and the Hard Problem as a “comfort barrier” against scientific progress on the subject – in the sense that, no matter what science says, it still will not answer the Hard Problem. Given the above, it is safe to say that most of those who remained within the physicalist paradigm have ended up adapting their discourses, trying to deflate *qualia* and adding some scientific data, in order to come closer to a possible explanation of parts of consciousness (i.e., the Easy Problems), but abstaining from explicitly elucidating how and why we experience it in the way we do (or, alternatively, abandoning the debate altogether, as it is the case with Mysterians).

But what is this experience of consciousness, after all? Those who tried to define it have come up with some terms, such as phenomenality, subjectivity, experience and/or phenomenal property, *qualia*, etc. As we have seen before, these are commonly characterized as simple, ineffable, intrinsic, private, subjective, and immediate. They would be the feeling of “what it is like to be”, the “blueness” of the color blue (or any other color) and the whole qualitative experience (Frankish, 2017, p. 16). Still, it would be possible to “access” such properties through introspection (the first-person way) and abstractly report them (the third person way), even though they are precisely inexplicable in physical terms (i.e., you would not be able to clearly describe the feeling of “blueness” of the sky, although you would be able to report that you “experienced” this feeling). However, the illusionist perspective shows that (conscious or not) experiences are actually physical brain and behavioral states. And, of course, we would be aware of these states the same way we are aware of anything – by receiving information and reacting to it.

Verbal reports, on the one hand, are the main way we obtain data about conscious experiences, although we have already seen that it is a relatively limited form of expression (Chalmers, 2018, p. 11). On the other hand, according to the illusionist theory, although introspection provides us with information about our experiences, allowing us to recognize, compare and report that information, it also leads us to make phenomenal judgements, whether about the supposed phenomenal characteristics of a particular experience or about phenomenal consciousness in general - since introspection can generate intermediate “representations” of sensory states, which would be the basis of our mistaken phenomenal judgements (Frankish, 2017, p.17). According to Illusionism, these intermediate “representations” of sensory states would be associated with quasi-phenomenal properties (or zero *qualia*), which consist of physical (non-phenomenal) properties of the experience that, in our introspective acts, are processed as if they were phenomenal. For example, the “blueness” (an intermediate

“representation” of the color blue) would be a quasi-phenomenal physical property of the “representation” of the visual stimulus, that commonly confuses our introspective mechanisms when processed as “phenomenal blueness”, when in fact there would be nothing qualitative or subjective in such a “representation”, and its existence would not provoke any explanatory problems (Frankish, 2017, p. 18). In theory, what the illusionists seek to defend is the fact that we scientifically know enough about quasi-phenomenal properties and its effects in our sensors and cognitive processors to be aware that, due to the functional configurations of our brains and bodies, we are constantly deceived into believing that there is something (phenomenal) more in the stimuli we perceive. Therefore, it would be a subjective choice: to accept that we do not have any phenomenal sensations, even if it may seem otherwise (for now), or to continue believing that “this stage magic (we experience) is real magic” (Dennett, 2016, p. 66).

The Illusionist Theory

If it is not yet clear to the reader, let's do another thought exercise (Frankish, 2019). How would you say you consciously experienced a cucumber? Let's try to assemble your report interspersing popular terms and neuroscientific concepts so you can see we know pretty much everything relevant that occurs in this process. First of all, you acquire sensory information about the shape, texture, color, location, etc. of the cucumber. In other words, the reflected light from the cucumber stimulates the photoreceptor cells in your retina, which send electrochemical impulses along the axons of the optic nerve to the lateral geniculate in the thalamus, and then to the visual cortex of the occipital lobe at the back of your brain. These signals stimulate activity in hierarchically organized groups of cells specialized in detecting progressively more complex properties of the visual stimulus. Second, you recognize what kind of thing it is (a solid object, a fruit, edible, green, a cucumber) and formulate and/or retrieve beliefs about it (that this object exists and is within your reach). Furthermore, you also recognize affordances (ways and opportunities for interaction) that the cucumber can offer. And third, you can remember past experiences with similar objects ("I like cucumbers, but I prefer carrots"). Or, in other words, during object recognition, visual information is globally transmitted ²⁹by attention mechanisms to cognitive systems such as memory, reasoning, emotion and decision-making, generating intermediate "representations" of the effects that the stimulus would cause in the aforementioned systems. These representations are then sent to more complex and "edited" introspective mechanisms so that any information regarding this object can be quickly accessed by the subject (you) to finally enable the answer to our question.

From all that we have discussed here, only the final lines of this thought exercise would be accessible to the subject. The remainder would occur unconsciously and with such rapidity that we would not discern such processing (i.e., it would not be akin to the appearance of a "loading" symbol prior to one's response; and even if one required some time, to gaze upward and cogitate, this act would represent solely the "formulation" of their narrative, that is, the specific manner in which they would respond). Additionally, it is noteworthy that, according to illusionist theory, this entire process would not yield anything supplementary in one's cognition (a final product, as Dennett might say) – that is, consciousness – but would instead constitute consciousness in and of itself. In other words, consciousness would represent a multilevel collection of cerebral processes and their reactions, which would become accessible in an

²⁹ We can consider this global transmission process as what is usually called "access consciousness", since it is responsible for making sensory information accessible to the rest of the cognitive system and therefore to the individual.

"edited way" to the introspective access and report of the individual. Furthermore, we may also posit that, within this context, nearly all of our experiences which entail the notion/perception of agency would comprise multilevel collections of processes and reactions serving a communicative/interactive purpose – that is, the majority of our phenomenal experiences would pertain to the identification and transmission of the affordances that certain stimuli would provide us (Baßler, 2015).

Moreover, this "edited version" of information derived from cucumber perception would not be fully and explicitly present to you whenever you sought to access it. Rather, only fragments of this version would be reported by you when responding to our question (and not a truly ineffable, intrinsic, immediate sensation of "greenness" of the cucumber!) because introspection provides access to "edited" models of the world, generated by diverse levels of cortical processing, enabling you to "think" and report your interpretation of the stimuli you experience. If, by chance, you were asked about the purported phenomenality of the cucumber, you might even agree with its existence (by discursive induction). However, due to the cognitive constraints we have just described, it would be impossible to explain this clearly. This exercise is not exclusive to visual perception; we can think of similar examples for our other senses, which would lead us to similar responses without the need to invoke any phenomenality (Cf. Frankish, 2019).

From this exercise, the (notorious) question may arise as to whether this sensory information belongs to objects or to our experience (is the "greenness" in the cucumber or in the brain?). Illusionist theory asserts that it exists in neither: starting from a scientific image of the world, "greenness" does not exist in cucumbers because colors, generally speaking, are complex processes involving the reflection of light waves³⁰; and "greenness" does not exist in the brain either because there is no qualitative property in our brains. There are no green atoms/neurons/circuits inside your head that create "representations" of internally-colored green images, and even if there were, there would be no inner eyes to see them. When illusionist theorists (like ourselves) refer to intermediate "representations" of sensory states, we do not mean that there are images and mental/neural prototypes surrounding your cortex, but rather that they are neural firing patterns that respond and correspond to the detection of specific interactive features of the world. Higher cortical processing layers would use these representations to construct models of the environment. Moreover, as previously mentioned,

³⁰ Or, in more technical terms, color is a visual perception triggered by the action of specific spectra of light beams on specialized cells in the retina, which transmit sensory impressions of the stimulus to the nervous system via pre-processed information through the optic nerve.

even if we are unaware of such representations, they are fundamental mechanisms that enable us to become aware of the things around us. With these models, the brain can create informational dispositions (environment, backgrounds, reports, etc.) that are sufficiently accessible to us for relatively direct contact with the world. Thus, these representations do not need to share any properties with the things they represent; in other words, the representation of "greenness" does not need to be green.

With that, the question remains as to how our introspection would lead us to make phenomenal judgments. It is known that access consciousness does not necessarily require high-level monitoring (reflection), enabling us to quickly respond to our environment. However, it is of interest to have an "edited version" of the standard of such processes available for reporting (Dennett, 1991). Some introspective mechanisms monitor access consciousness and track high-level (complex, abstract) patterns of neural activity that encode the properties and affordances of perceived objects, as well as the associations, expectations, emotions, and biases they evoke. These high-level patterns of neural activity are intermediate representations expressed through models with schematic and caricatured forms (i.e., low-accuracy models), globally conveying the multidimensional and multimodal impact of perceived objects. It is worth noting that these schematic models themselves also consist of patterns of neuron firing and are responsible for signaling, albeit mistakenly, to the system as a whole, the presence of phenomenal properties (similar to how written words signal the presence of objects) to aid in perceiving the actual physical and interactive characteristics of the objects we attend to. Subsequently, other high-level processing systems utilize these schematic models for control and planning, enabling us to report them (if necessary/desired) and, through them, recognize, remember, reason, and decide on a course of action in response to any stimulus.

Therefore, we can assert that introspection activates internal self-monitoring systems (much like our sensory organs are activated by stimuli from the environment), which investigate the impact that objects would have on the brain and body, and that the effects of this impact are often mistakenly interpreted as phenomenal. The sensation of "greenness" you describe would thus be an expression of your response to a green cucumber. The illusion here is that our introspective actions do not appear to refer to what we experience as phenomenal properties as if they were merely physical properties of the observer, but rather as "powers" (to create such impacts) that the observed objects possess – that is, the "greenness" is represented as a "power" of the surfaces (of the cucumber) to affect us in some way (whether it be the way we all perceive the color green or the specific way that you describe feeling the "greenness" of green). Consequently, this illusion seems to suggest that the easiest way to retrieve (introspectively)

and transmit/communicate experiences that were significant to us (in the popular sense) is to select the objects that had a significant impact on us (in the biological sense) and attribute them properties that seem significant to us.

In other words, introspection can be understood as a cascade of informational and reactive processes, and when we talk about how our experiences seem to us, we are talking about certain effects and dispositions of such processes and reactions. In short, using Dennett's words: "[human beings] ought to have good expectations [...] about what they will do next, what they will think next and what they will expect next" (Dennett, 2015, p. 5). Consequently, whenever our brains perform this task correctly in response to a stimulus, we misidentify our own expectations, dispositions, and reactions with external properties that are inherent to the objects. Theoretically, this means that, when we are stimulated and describe the experience at the level of the subject, we infer (and therefore believe in) the existence of properties in our world that are independent of its internal and behavioral responses in the observer, such as the "cuteness" of babies, the "redness" of apples, or the "blueness" of the sky. This is why it is so difficult for us to conceive of phenomenal properties as an illusion - something that would be merely inferred by our schematic models from the scientific image of the world (Baßler, 2015, p. 4). In other words, the subjective qualities of conscious sensations are merely part of a narrative produced by the introspective probe of our "edited version" of the world, as it appears to us in the manifest image.

Defending Illusionism

In light of everything we have presented here, if the reader still has doubts regarding our thesis that Illusionism is, most likely, the best candidate for the standard theory of consciousness, let us briefly examine a few more of its positive aspects (Frankish, 2019). Firstly, it is a relatively new theory that incorporates some of the main dualist intuitions - by seriously addressing the supposed qualitative aspects of experiences, based on the assumption that consciousness appears to have non-physical phenomenal properties - as well as physicalist intuitions - by claiming that consciousness could be fully explained in physical terms.

Secondly, the Illusionist theory has explanatory simplicity, since if we consider that phenomenal consciousness cannot be scientifically explained but can only be "observed" in the first person, it is possible to conclude that either (1) it is an illusion or (2) current science would need to radically change to find a way to explain it. However, given the constant advancements in neuroscience and what we have demonstrated to be the often-fallacious aspect of our intuitions and introspective biases, it seems to us much simpler and empirically viable to take the first option as correct.

Thirdly, if we think that there is the possibility of being aware of any phenomenal properties, it would be because we (precisely) have something like representational models of them, without making any difference if these representations are illusory or true - since if our introspective mechanisms provide us with the appearance of these phenomenal properties (mistakenly or not), it is likely that this occurs because having them is fundamental to our survival. However, if current science has indicated that our brains and bodies do not have phenomenal properties, it seems clear to us that the appearance of such properties must be taken, a priori, as illusory.

Fourthly, unlike many of its alternatives, Illusionism is a theory that does not require thought experiments involving "35th century science" and extravagant assumptions about how the brain works, which run counter to what we know in current science, in order to have even a basic understanding of what philosophers are proposing when they debate it.

Lastly, particularly with respect to the "nature of consciousness", Illusionism could act as a *Debunking Argument*³¹, not only against all forms of dualism, but even against non-illusionist physicalist strands. Here, the illusionist theory asserts that if we can explain our beliefs about something without referring to that thing, then we should discount the truth of

³¹ Briefly, a Debunking Argument says that if there is an explanation for our belief about X that is independent of X, those beliefs are not justified (Chalmers, 2018).

those beliefs (Chalmers, 2011). For example, if we can explain people's belief in God in psychological terms without invoking any supernatural/divine events, then we have no apparent reason to trust in the existence of the object of those beliefs. Analogously, the same can be said of our beliefs about phenomenal consciousness being non-physical. As we have already seen, there are good reasons to believe that all of our cognitive processes, including belief formation, can be fully explained in physical terms. Hence, it appears that we would hold exactly the same beliefs about phenomenal consciousness - that it is real, vivid, indivisible, ineffable, undeniable, and non-physical - even if such beliefs were not actually true or justifiable. Therefore, it does not make sense to rely on these beliefs, particularly in the manner in which they are currently asserted in many philosophical circles.

Final Thoughts

In the first part of this article, we briefly presented the scenario of the debate regarding consciousness in the philosophy of mind. Subsequently, we delved deeper into the historical process of deflating qualia (diet or classic), highlighting their inherent problems and demonstrating how, in reality, they can (and should) be considered illusory – as has been called into question for some time. We also demonstrated how contemporary philosophical thought about the mind has been influenced by dualistic intuitions, and we highlighted the problematic nature of its intrusion into the academic study of consciousness. In a second part, we aimed to expose why Illusionism is not only a philosophically appropriate and empirically engaged research program, but also an explanatory strategy already considered by a small but representative number of traditional philosophers of the mind. Finally, we explored the main concepts and mechanisms employed by the illusionist theory, and defended it against some of its most common criticisms.

We hope our readers³² will have understood the complexity of these mechanisms, brain processes, and behavioral reactions involved in human experience, and that they will have grasped our thesis that the illusionist theory represents the best candidate for dealing with consciousness. Furthermore, it is worth recalling that the Easy Problems are already widely studied empirically, and that historically, scientists have tended to ignore the treatment of the phenomenal question due to the conceptual and philosophical confusion and resistance that exists surrounding it (Dennett, 2016). Therefore, if we adopt the illusionist perspective on phenomenal properties, we can "update" our concepts and philosophical debates about consciousness and enable truly interdisciplinary scientific projects to work together with unprecedented effectiveness, aiming not only to explain consciousness, but also possible applications of the knowledge resulting from its elucidation.

³² We thank Thales M.M. Silva for his observations and reading of an initial version of this article.

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