



Eden Benumbed: A Critique of Panqualityism and the Disclosure View of Consciousness

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Abstract

In the marketplace of opinions concerning the metaphysics of mind and consciousness *panqualityism* (PQ) occupies an interesting position. It is a distinct variant of neutral monism, as well as of protophenomenalism, and as such it strives to carve out a conceptual niche midway between physicalism and mentalism. It is also a brand of Russellian monism, advocated by its supporters as a less costly and less extravagant alternative to panpsychism. Being clearly articulated and relatively well-developed it constitutes an intriguing view. Nonetheless, the present paper takes a decisively critical stance towards PQ. In particular, it challenges it on two principal grounds. First, I argue that PQ's *analysis of experience*, and of the *qualities* tasked with constituting the phenomenal character of experience, is fundamentally flawed. Second, I argue that PQ's attempt to explain phenomenal consciousness as a function of reflective *awareness* is equally misguided. Along the way, the paper also points the shortcomings of previously established critiques of PQ. All in all, the discussion identifies some difficulties that are likely to generalize beyond PQ's specific circumstances, raising concerns regarding the viability of a "middle of the road" solution to the mind–body problem.

Keywords Affects · Awareness · Edenic qualities · Phenomenal qualities · Receptivity

“But spite of all the criticising elves, those who would make us feel must feel themselves”

Charles Churchill, *The Rosciad* line 961

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1 Introduction

The possibility of steering a metaphysical course midway between the monistic extremes of orthodox physicalism, on the one hand, and a full blown panpsychism or idealism, on the other hand, is not without certain appeal. William James (1904); the neo-realists (Holt et al., 1912); Russell (1921, 1927); Schlick (1925); and Feigl (1960) are some notable examples of eminent scholars sympathetic to such a quest. More recently, renewed interest in *neutral monism* (e.g., Nagel, 2012; Stubenberg, 2016; Wishon, 2015), and David Chalmers' advocacy of *panprotopsychoism* as a serious metaphysical contender (Chalmers, 1996, 2017a), have breathed some fresh air unto the old sails of this midway course. Yet, substantiating the reality of a definite tertium quid, neither physical nor mental, and articulating the nature of such an alternative, have proven a difficult task. It is much easier to contemplate such labels as 'neutral monism', 'panprotopsychoism', or 'protophenomenalism' in the abstract than to elaborate a detailed, plausible, and informative theoretical scheme.

One of the most sophisticated and best developed views within this ambit is a theory called *panqualityism*. Awkwardly named and with few living supporters, it is nevertheless an important position. First, because it really is a midway course, charting a conceptual avenue that collapses neither to physicalism nor to mentalism. Second, because it avoids the notorious obscurity of some of its closest geographical neighbors, thereby sustaining a welcome advance from a mere idea to a theory that can be properly evaluated. Third, because it constitutes a noteworthy variant of the broader and much discussed view known as *Russellian monism*. Finally, because it plays a significant role in the lively debate concerning the pros and cons of *panpsychism*. These virtues notwithstanding, the present paper takes a decisively critical look at panqualityism. In particular, it challenges both its account of *qualities* and the contention that phenomenal consciousness consists in *awareness* of such qualities. Apart from the specific interest of assessing panqualityism itself, it is my conviction that a critical examination of the metaphysical and epistemological commitments undergirding this theoretical stance yields insights and lessons of a wider philosophical import.

Section 2 introduces panqualityism and situates it in the context of the mind–body problem, and more specifically in the context of Russellian monism and the debate concerning panpsychism. Section 3 provides a more systematic articulation of panqualityism and of its core theoretical tenets. Section four reviews the major line of critique directed at panqualityism in the extant literature. This line of critique, pursued most notably by Chalmers (2017a, 2017b), concentrates on the quality-awareness gap and on the possibility of panqualityist zombies. As a result of this preoccupation the debate tends to center around the question is awareness itself rife with phenomenology. I argue that the problems with panqualityism are too broad and too deep to be properly addressed by a narrow focus on the allegedly sui generis phenomenology of awareness. Section 5 follows this line of argument by stressing an *alternative* interpretation of Chalmers' critique of panqualityism — one that emphasizes the implausibility

of explaining experience in terms of relations of informational access between non-phenomenal states. Although this problem is well known, in particular in the context of functionalist theories of consciousness (see Gennaro, 2005; Goldman, 1993), more needs to be done in order to demonstrate its effectiveness as a critique of panqualityism (which, as a species of Russellian monism, is not a *pure* functionalist theory). Sections 6–8 develop this requisite critique in several complementary steps.

Section 6 challenges the panqualityist contention that the phenomenal character of experience is grounded in objectively existing phenomenal qualities, qualities which are both *phenomenal* and *independent* of experiencing subjects. I argue that the notion that phenomenal qualities could exist unexperienced is based on a hasty extrapolation from our naive intuitions concerning colors, and that such extrapolation fails to do justice to the general character of experience, in particular primitive experience. A more adequate analysis of experience and its primitive manifestations provides little support for the notion that the phenomenal character of experience could be grounded in objectively existing (i.e., non-subjective) phenomenal qualities.

Section 7 constitutes a sustained assault on the idea that phenomenal consciousness consists in *reflective access* to, or awareness of, one's own phenomenal qualities (where, as panqualityism has it, neither awareness, nor the qualities of which one is aware, are considered to be experience-involving in their own right). In a nutshell, the argument stresses the point that no amount of reflective access could possibly turn an intrinsically numb substance into a locus of experience. Finally, Section 8 elaborates further on this theme by critically analyzing two figurative expressions which supporters of panqualityism employ in articulating their view: the concept of *disclosure*, and the metaphor of the *searchlight*. Attention to these similes reveals that they *presuppose* experience and are therefore ill-fitted to be employed in a systematic explanation of consciousness. I conclude that panqualityism, although rich in content, cleverly developed, and ably defended, is, in all likelihood, an untenable view.

2 Panqualityism in Dialectical Context

Panqualityism (or PQ for short) is the view that phenomenal qualities abide throughout nature and are the ultimate intrinsic constituents of all concrete phenomena.¹ As such, it qualifies as an *unorthodox* position in the marketplace of contemporary opinions on the mind–body problem. Mainstream philosophy of mind considers the mind–body problem a battleground fought between physicalism and dualism, which is why, in this context, any approach that stands apart from these two old antagonists

¹ Although proponents of the view (Lockwood, 1989; Coleman, 2012, 2013, 2017a) speak about "phenomenal qualities" readers must be warned that such qualities are not, in themselves, *experiential* (See section III for a clarification of the position). Perhaps in order to address this terminological issue Chalmers (2017a, 41) distinguishes between qualities and *phenomenal properties* — where only the latter, but not the former, imply experience.

fits the title 'unorthodox' (even if the approach happens to be as old a position as *idealism*).

In recent years, much of the interest in unorthodox alternatives to the physicalism-dualism debate concerns theories that fall under the banner of *Russellian monism* (see the collection of papers in Alter & Nagasawa, 2015). Russellian monism (RM) is an umbrella term for theories that are inspired by Russell's argument that science concerns itself exclusively with structure and function, and is therefore perpetually ignorant with respect to the *intrinsic* nature of the entities over which it quantifies (see Russell, 1927, 1948). Consequently, Russellian monists seek to move beyond the strictures of purely structural and functional descriptions and to complete the picture, so to speak, by providing a positive speculative account of the quidditas, or categorical essences, underlying observable phenomena.² In holding, with Russell, that physical science provides us with a view of nature which is essentially incomplete (on account of its nomic structuralism), RM departs from orthodox physicalism.³ At the same time, by insisting on an ontological monism (type-monism, to be more precise) which considers the duality between the inner natures of things and their observed exteriors to be purely epistemological, RM sets itself apart from dualism.

As a species of RM, PQ is an alternative to both dualism and orthodox physicalism. Yet, dialectically, it is often set as an alternative to other competitors within the Russellian-monist camp, in particular panpsychism. *Panpsychism* is the view that consciousness is immanently present throughout nature and that the ultimate intrinsic constituents of concrete reality are subjects of experience.⁴ In recent years, the stature of this approach to the mind–body problem enjoys a steady growth among scholars.⁵ Yet, the view also faces some seemingly formidable problems. One source of uneasiness for many critics is the so-called *incredulous stare* objection (see, e.g., Brüntrup & Jaskolla, 2017), namely, the apparent preposterousness of the idea that beings such as electrons enjoy conscious experiences. Another difficulty, generally held to be the most daunting challenge facing panpsychism, is the *subject combination problem*,

² Sometimes, such an account amounts to nothing more than the formal commitment to the *existence* of underlying quidditas; other times, an effort is made to specify their *nature*. For an extended analysis of Russellian monism see any of the following: Alter and Nagasawa (2012); Chalmers (2017a); Kind (2015); Montero (2015); Pereboom (2015); Stoljar (2014); and Wishon (2015).

³ By "essentially incomplete" it is meant that science is not merely incomplete in the contingent sense of having not yet discovered all the relevant facts within its purview but, rather, that there is an entire dimension of reality, the *inner* dimension of things, which lies outside the compass of the ordinary methods of scientific inquiry.

⁴ It may be stressed that there are many different breeds of panpsychism: some are closer in spirit to idealism, while others to property dualism or even physicalism; some are constitutive forms of panpsychism while others are non-constitutive (in particular emergentist); some are framed in a bottom-up, atomistic mould (viz., micropsychism), while others take a top-down monistic form (cosmopsychism), and so on. In particular, not all forms of panpsychism fall under the generic banner of Russellian monism. For a synoptic view see Goff et al. (2020).

⁵ Among philosophers, Chalmers (1996), Skrbina (2005), and Strawson (2006) are three influential works sympathetic to panpsychism. Brüntrup and Jaskolla (2017), and Seager (2020), are two recent anthologies on the subject. Renowned contemporary scientists with sympathies to panpsychism include Smolin (2013) and Tononi and Koch (2015).

viz., the problem of explaining how simple experiential subjects combine to form other, more complex, subjects (Coleman, 2013; Goff, 2009; James, 1890; Seager, 1995).⁶

In this polemical context, advocates of PQ proclaim the advantage of their view in both respects. Thus, Feigl (1960, 32) and Lockwood (1989, 170) stress that PQ avoids the slide to panpsychism, a position they consider incredible, while Coleman (2012) emphasizes the fact that by refraining from postulating conscious subjects at the fundamental levels of reality PQ avoids the subject combination problem.⁷ At the hands of such authors, then, PQ is promoted as a more parsimonious, less extravagant, less problematic, and less radical a position than panpsychism. PQ, the ideas goes, is a fine compromise: it does justice to the intrinsic qualitative richness of the world while remaining as close as possible to the sober agenda of physicalism.

At the background of this debate, then, looms the question does PQ deliver on its promise to provide us with an alternative to panpsychism which is, at once, more plausible and theoretically less costly. Several critics have argued that, in all likelihood, it does not (Blamauer, 2013; Chalmers, 2017a, 2017b; Goff, 2017; Wager, 2020). In what follows, I join rank with the critics, adding a unique angle to the debate which, I hope, illumines the matter in a compelling new light. If I am correct, PQ is not merely a research program marred with cardinal difficulties, but, rather, a platform whose very coherence is in serious doubt. But before attempting to convey the point we need, first, to put some flesh on the bones of the excessively skeletal description of PQ provided hitherto.

3 Panqualityism and the Disclosure Approach to Phenomenal Consciousness

The term 'panqualityism' was first employed by S.C. Pepper and Herbert Feigl (see Feigl, 1960) in a sense continuous with its present use.⁸ Moreover, Feigl (1975) makes the case that the view could be traced, in essence, to Schlick (1918/1925). However, on the present occasion I shall discuss PQ as it is known today, that is, as pertaining to its more recent incarnation, elaborated and defended by Michael Lockwood (1989) and Sam Coleman (2012, 2013, 2017a).⁹ Although Lockwood and Coleman developed their views independently of each other, and although their theories are not identical in all respects, the structural similarities between their respective positions are striking enough to merit common treatment in the context of the present work and its polemical purposes.

⁶ There are *other* combination problems (see Chalmers, 2017b for a review), but it is generally believed that the subject combination problem is the most serious threat to panpsychism.

⁷ While the relevant literature on panpsychism includes discussions of other problems (e.g., Chalmers, 2017b), the two mentioned above are the ones singled out by supporters of PQ.

⁸ Continuous, but not necessarily identical. There is a sense in which Feigl's view is weaker than the PQ discussed below. However, the details need not concern us here.

⁹ John Heil (2003, 234–235) gestures in a similar direction, although his account is less detailed.

The Coleman-Lockwood variant of PQ can be schematically summarized in one thesis and four core principles. Following Lockwood (1989, 162), I shall call the main thesis held by this approach the *disclosure* view, or [disclosure] for short:

[Disclosure]: Consciousness consists in a *non*-phenomenal awareness of intrinsic phenomenal qualities.

The four core principles are these:

*PQ*₁. The fundamental intrinsic makeup of reality consists of *Edenic qualities*.

*PQ*₂. Fundamental reality is *void* of experience and subjectivity (put otherwise, Edenic qualities are, in their default state, entirely unfelt).

*PQ*₃. For any system S, S is phenomenally conscious iff it is endowed with *reflective* (more specifically, higher-order) *access* to its own Edenic qualities.

*PQ*₄. For any system S endowed with a set of Edenic qualities Q {*q*₁, *q*₂, ... *q*_{*n*}}, reflective access to members of Q is effected in the form of *awareness* of such members, where 'awareness' is understood in purely functional (hence, non-phenomenal) terms.

To explicate, consider now the above four principles in order. *PQ*₁ is an articulation of the basic idea that phenomenal qualities form the ultimate intrinsic makeup of reality. However, in order to understand why this principle is formulated in terms of the concept of Edenic qualities we need to engage with the next principle, *PQ*₂. *PQ*₂ asserts that experience and subjectivity are emergent, being wholly absent at the fundamental level of concrete reality. Both Coleman (e.g., 2013, 40–41) and Lockwood (1989, 162) hold that phenomenal qualities can exist unexperienced and in the absence of any awareness directed at them. This provocative contention raises an immediate concern regarding our ability to make proper sense of the notion that phenomenal qualities are capable of existing wholly unexperienced. Some argue that phenomenal qualities are *necessarily* experience-involving (e.g., Foster, 1982, 103–107). But even if the possibility of unexperienced qualia is not challenged outright it is a legitimate concern to worry *how* we could possibly make proper sense of qualities that are both *phenomenal* and unexperienced.

It is in this context that Chalmers' concept of *Edenic qualities* (Chalmers, 2006) proves itself useful. Edenic qualities are qualities whose reality perfectly matches their appearance, just as we would have expected it to be in an epistemic Garden of Eden — where all perceptions are veridical in a naïve realistic sense, and things are exactly as they appear to be. In the Garden of Eden (so goes the story) some objects are intrinsically red. Upon perceiving such objects, Adam and Eve would, of course, judge them to be red; but the objects are just as red even when unperceived. According to Chalmers (2017a, 42), it is such a conception of qualities that PQ seems to presuppose. Hence, the claim that phenomenal qualities constitute the fundamental

intrinsic makeup of reality can be translated into the language of Edenic qualities, as per PQ₁.¹⁰

Since we have already touched upon PQ₂, I shall spend no more time on it other than to take the opportunity to remind ourselves, again, that it consists in asserting that neither sentience nor subjectivity are characteristic features of fundamental reality. Primordially, the world is a collection of Edenic qualities, or of Edenically-qualified primitive objects, but nothing in this default-state configuration of reality is *conscious*: there is neither awareness, nor perception, nor feelings of any sort; indeed, no subjective dimension whatsoever. Consciousness, and with it subjectivity and sentience, is an *emergent* phenomenon.

Explaining this emergence is the burden of the final two principles, PQ₃ and PQ₄. We can consider these two together since PQ₃ states the general idea that consciousness consists in reflective access to the Edenic qualities of one's own material constitution (more specifically, to qualities of one's brain states); while PQ₄ follows up with the more specific contention that what we customarily call "awareness" is nothing but such reflective access. Both Coleman and Lockwood insist that consciousness appears on the world stage by courtesy of the emergent capacity of some creatures to reflectively *access* their own Edenic qualities — a *direct* access that discloses to one's mind the rich intrinsic reality of one's world.¹¹ More specifically, both authors identify consciousness with reflective access to phenomenal qualities of one's own brain: a process in which some brain states, presumably of a higher-order type, directly access other brain states. Finally, both authors identify this act of reflective access with *awareness*; and both insist that, thus understood, awareness is a purely *functional* process: it is not, itself, intrinsically experiential, nor does it add supplementary baggage to the extant phenomenal fray.

Taken together, PQ₁-PQ₄ yield the *disclosure view*, namely, the thesis that consciousness consists in a non-phenomenal awareness of intrinsic phenomenal qualities. Both Coleman and Lockwood clearly adhere to the view that consciousness is a function of the application of awareness to independently existing phenomenal qualities:

"Why should one not think of awareness precisely as *disclosing* certain intrinsic attributes of states of, or events within, our brains —intrinsic attributes, moreover, which do not, in general, depend for their existence on their being sensed?.... To repeat, phenomenal qualities are, on the disclosure view, simply intrinsic attributes *as* disclosed by awareness" (Lockwood, 1989, 162).

"What of awareness? I favor a higher-order thought theory, where a HOT's suitably representing a sensory state constitutes that state's being conscious. We might envisage a panqualityist world, a web of qualities, with the HOT

¹⁰ An alternative terminology for the Edenic view of colors is *realist color primitivism* (see Maund, 2019); a position defended, amongst others, by Campbell (1994), Gert (2008), and Hacker (1987). The Edenic view of qualities can therefore be called *realist qualia primitivism*.

¹¹ The idea, traced all the way to Russell (1927), is that through *direct* access to intrinsic features of one's neural states one also establishes *indirect* access to the outside world perceived by, and through, our neurological apparatus.

systems in brains, by representing other bits of these same brains, enabling consciousness of certain tiny portions of the material universe" (Coleman, 2017a, 265).

Moreover, both authors treat awareness as a cognitive-functional process which is not, itself, suffused with phenomenal content. Coleman is rather explicit about it, stating "I deny that mere awareness has phenomenology" (2017a, 270); while Lockwood argues that "phenomenal qualities are not qualities *of* awareness. On the contrary, awareness is *of* them" (1989, 162). Indeed, resistance to the idea that awareness is essentially phenomenologically-involved is built into the very fabric of PQ. For clearly, if awareness is phenomenologically-involved then PQ's account of the *emergence* of consciousness is woefully inadequate.

Finally, both authors use the same imagistic *metaphor* to convey the gist of their position: the metaphor of a searchlight, or spotlight. Thus, Lockwood argues that "one could think of awareness as a kind of searchlight, sweeping around an inner landscape.... revealing qualities that were already part of the landscape" (1989, 163), while Coleman compares awareness-generating HOTS to "*spotlights*, illuminating minute areas of the panqualityist universe" (2017a, 266). The comparison of awareness to a searchlight is intriguing and I return to it in Section 8 below, but, for now, suffice it to notice that it encodes the disclosure view in its entirety. For the metaphor brings home the central message, namely, that consciousness consists in the application of *awareness* to pre-existent phenomenal qualities; where awareness is characterized as a higher-order functional process that plays the purely functional role of *disclosing* that which is already there, waiting to be disclosed.

4 Panqualityist Zombies and the Debate Concerning Awareness

Having outlined PQ, and having touched upon its theoretical aspirations, it is time to move to the main purpose of the present work which is to critique the panqualityist platform. Before laying down my own take on the subject, I begin with a review of the most prominent critique of PQ found in the present literature.

The main grievances addressed against PQ have, so far, focused on the concept of *awareness*. In particular, the exchange on this topic has been dominated by David Chalmers' contention that PQ suffers from a *zombie argument* equivalent to the one besetting orthodox physicalism (Chalmers, 2017a, 43; see also Goff, 2017, 161). Chalmers argues that no amount of micro-level qualitative and physical (i.e., structural) truths necessitate a macro-phenomenal truth, or, in other words, that the formula 'micro-level qualities + physical structure' fails to guarantee the reality of subjective experience. Put in a different key, the idea is that PQ's recipe for consciousness fails to exclude the possibility of a panqualityist zombie world, a world (we can imagine it to be a physical duplicate of our world) in which all micro-qualities and all the relevant physical structure are in place but, nonetheless, experience is wholly absent.

Awareness comes into play in justifying this conceivability argument. There is, Chalmers avers, a quality-awareness *gap*, in that "for any set of instantiated qualities

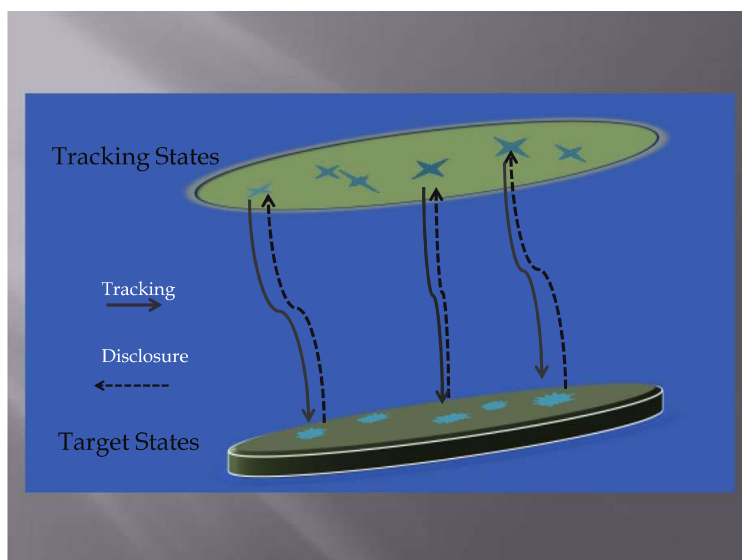
and physical properties it is conceivable [hence possible] that all those qualities and properties are instantiated without any awareness of qualities" (2017a, 43). In other words, PQ's world, a world in which the intrinsic basis of matter consists of Edenic qualities, falls short of necessitating *awareness* of such qualities. But if such a world could unfold completely unaware then PQ fails to guarantee the reality of phenomenal consciousness. The gap remains unclosed.

At this point, however, supporters of PQ could protest that the argument fails to do justice to the internal logic of their position. Panqualityists claim, first, that the qualitative riches of experience are grounded entirely in Edenic micro-qualities, and, second, that awareness is a purely functional process: an abstractly characterized cognitive operation whose role is to provide direct access to the Edenic qualities of one's own brain, thereby disclosing these qualities and making them consciously apprehended. From this perspective, one could reasonably resist the idea that a PQ zombie world is conceivable. On the panqualityist narrative, all the necessary phenomenal riches are already there from the beginning, waiting to be disclosed. What is being missed, initially (say, at the prebiotic or pre-cerebral levels of cosmic evolution), is a degree of structural sophistication sufficient for enabling certain systems to reflectively *access* (some of) their own intrinsic qualities. However, once the requisite structure is in place and some quality-laden brain states, call them *tracking* states, reflectively access other quality-laden brain states, which we may call *target* states, the hitherto undisclosed reality of one's inner qualitative existence is laid bare — and one is initiated into subjective phenomenal life (see Fig. 1). Now, clearly, panqualityist structural duplicates of ourselves would likewise be endowed with direct inner access to their own target states. If so, it is open for friends of PQ to argue that the presumption of the possibility of panqualityist zombies rests on a *misconception* (cf. Coleman, 2017a, 269): any system whose intrinsic makeup consists of Edenic qualities, and that instantiates the right sort of organizational complexity, would necessarily be a subject of experience, aware of its vicissitudes.

Chalmers (2017a, 44) opines that the above conceivability argument gives reason to reject a functionalist reduction of awareness. But in light of the previous paragraph this contention appears less than obvious. I suggest that to the extent that the intuitions underlying Chalmers' argument carry real force they are not best served by the zombie argument. Rather, an effective challenge of PQ must focus directly on its core theoretical assumptions, namely, (a) that phenomenal content is reducible to Edenic micro-qualities; (b) that awareness is a purely functional process; and (c) that phenomenal consciousness is a function of the interaction between terms that are not, themselves, phenomenally conscious. If phenomenal consciousness is irreducible to the panqualityist formula this must be because at least one of these core assumptions is wrong. The zombie argument is, at best, an indirect assault on these core theoretical principles. It does not tell us exactly *where* the problem lies.¹²

¹² In saying that the zombie argument constitutes an indirect assault on PQ I mean that it uses the method of *indirect proof*. While this is a powerful method its present application is such that, even if successful (and we have seen some reasons for doubt), it does not identify precisely *which* assumption, or assumptions, are to bear blame, nor *why*.

Fig. 1 *Disclosure* as a process in which higher-order brain states ("tracking states") track lower-order brain states ("target states"), accessing their intrinsic qualitative constitution and making it available for conscious apprehension



In a different paper, Chalmers says a little more. In combating the functionalist reduction of awareness, he argues that.

"The obvious objection here is that the same considerations that motivate the rejection of functionalism about experience also motivate the rejection of functionalism about the awareness relation. Awareness involves phenomenology, and there are good reasons to think that no mere functional state can constitute phenomenology" (2017b, 203).

Unfortunately, this passage could be interpreted in two different senses:

- 1) "Awareness involves phenomenology" means that the existence of awareness *entails* the existence of phenomenology. In any possible world in which awareness is present, experience too must be present. If so, the alleged problem with PQ could be put like this: the Edenically-qualified expanse which PQ identifies as the fundamental reality of our world contains no phenomenology whatsoever. On top of that, PQ postulates mere functional awareness. But there are compelling reasons to think that no mere functional states, applied to a non-experiential domain, could constitute phenomenology.
- 2) "Awareness involves phenomenology" means that the cognitive process (or set of processes) we call "awareness" is, *itself*, rife with phenomenology — a phenomenology for which PQ offers no explanation (and, indeed, is inconsistent with the theory as stated). If so, the alleged problem with PQ consists of the fact that a mere functional analysis of awareness cannot account for the unique phenomenology of awareness.

Clearly, these are two rather different readings. The first interpretation challenges the entire panqualitivist scheme as an inadequate framework for the explanation of experience. The second interpretation is considerably narrower in scope: it focuses purely on awareness and its alleged phenomenology, challenging PQ's analysis of awareness. To my mind, it is the first, broader, interpretation that goes deeper and gets

closer to the heart of the matter since it points to the insufficiency of PQ's explanatory apparatus to account for the reality of experience per se. Yet, surprisingly, it is the second, more local interpretation that has, so far, received greater attention.

In his rejoinder to Chalmers, Coleman (2017a, 270–273) focuses entirely on the question as to whether or not there exists a *sui generis* phenomenology of awareness, which, unsurprisingly, he denies. The role of awareness, he insists, is to *present* us with sensory qualities; it need not itself be counted among these qualities anymore than the lens of a video camera must appear as an integral part of the television episode which the camera is filming. In a recent response to Coleman, Wager (2020, 122) argues that there are positive reasons to conclude that there *is* a phenomenology of awareness. In particular, he stresses that awareness is perspectival, and that experiencing things from a bounded perspective is correlated with a unique phenomenal feel. Interestingly, Wager connects this perspectival analysis of the phenomenology of awareness to the concept of *pre-reflective (or implicit) self-awareness* known from the phenomenological literature (Sartre, 1937), as well as to non-sensory forms of phenomenology more generally.¹³

While I am sympathetic to the idea that awareness has a unique phenomenology of its own it nevertheless seems to me a mistake to center the debate on this issue. Granted, if awareness is suffused with a *sui generis* phenomenology then PQ is falsified; but in focusing exclusively on the phenomenology of awareness we lose sight of the fact that the problem with PQ runs deeper: viz., that it has to do not merely with its characterization of awareness but also with the assumption that phenomenal content could be reductively explained in terms of Edenic micro-qualities. If there is a problem with the panqualityist platform it is not merely that it doesn't get things quite right about the awareness relation but, rather, that something is amiss with the *disclosure* view as a whole. In the next Section 1 turn to develop an alternative line of critique — one that does not depend on intuitions regarding the phenomenology of awareness yet, all the while, exposes the trouble with PQ in an especially potent manner.

5 Can the Hard Problem be Impaled on a Two-pronged Pitchfork?

Returning to the first interpretation of the "awareness involves phenomenology" quotation from Chalmers we can see that, according to it, the problem with PQ consists of the fact that it strives to explain experience by joining together two *non-experiential* components:

- (1) A set of entities $E = \{s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n\}$, each of whose members is intrinsically constituted of Edenic qualities *without*, however, being an abode of experience in virtue of being so constituted.
- (2) An intra-individual functional operation (tagged as "awareness") whereby some Edenically-qualified states of a given system (the tracking states) directly access other such states of the same system (its target states).

¹³ For discussions of pre-reflective self-awareness related to contemporary analytic work on consciousness see Janzen, 2006; Kriegel, 2003; Zahavi, 2005. For an extended discussion of non-sensory phenomenology see Kriegel, 2015.

Noticeably, on this picture the instantiation of Edenic qualities is not, itself, sufficient for experience, whose appearance on the scene depends upon the emergence of an appropriate level of functional sophistication capable of effecting the *disclosure* of target states through the agency of higher-order tracking states. The intuitive objection voiced by Chalmers can now be interpreted as the contention that no mere functional states, or operations, could possibly eke out experience from an ontological domain whose fabric consists of decisively *non-experiential* qualities. As can be readily seen, this critique is rather similar to a familiar general objection raised against higher-order monitoring theories of consciousness, namely, "how could possession of a meta-state confer subjectivity or feeling on a lower-level state that did not otherwise possess it?" (Goldman, 1993, 112–113; see also XXX 2014). Yet, advocates of PQ believe that unlike HOT and HOP theories they have the wherewithal to respond to the challenge (see Coleman, 2017a, 268). The key lies in the dual contention that, on the one hand, the qualitative character of experience consists entirely of instantiated Edenic qualities, while, on the other hand, experience per se requires *awareness*, and awareness is an emergent phenomenon contingent upon the evolved machination of higher-order reflective states.

Intriguingly, this dialectic results in an apparent paradox insofar as Edenic qualities are considered both sufficient and insufficient for experience: sufficient in respect of the qualitative component of experience; insufficient in respect of the subjective component.¹⁴ Since these components are conceptually differentiable it is tempting to argue that there is no real paradox here. But a closer look reveals that the picture remains deeply puzzling since PQ is committed to the assumption that although Edenic qualities are not themselves sufficient for experience they nevertheless sustain a complete grounding of the phenomenal character of experience. But how could qualities whose instantiation necessitates no phenomenal feel whatsoever constitute the "what it's like" character of lived experience? Moreover, how could the "accessing" of insentient target states by equally insentient tracking states culminate in experience? The next two sections address these concerns in order.

6 More than Meets the Eye: Edenic Qualities and the Ocular Bias in the Analysis of Experience

The idea that Edenic qualities are sufficient for supplying the phenomenal character of experience raises several pressing problems. To begin with, notice that it involves ontological separation of phenomenal qualities from experience: phenomenal qualities can exist unexperienced; indeed, they can exist apart from any

¹⁴ The distinction between these two constitutive components of experience is stressed by Levine (2001) who believes that it motivates a division of labor in our endeavors to explain consciousness.

experiencing being. But can *all* phenomenal qualities be coherently imagined as being potentially unexperienced? Might the phenomenal qualities constituting a sensation of itchiness, a feeling of joy, or a sombre mood exist wholly unexperienced? As Goff puts it "How could *what it's like to feel pain* be instantiated without anyone feeling pain?" (2017, 161). The immediate concern here is that the panqualitivist template for thinking about phenomenal qualities is, at best, seriously incomplete insofar as many paradigmatic phenomenal qualities appear inseparable from experience and proof-resistant to rational reconstruction in terms of unexperienced Edenic qualities.

Significantly, in advancing the idea of unexperienced phenomenal qualities proponents of PQ set their eyes invariably on *visual* qualia:

"Those who think they understand what it is for phenomenal qualities to inhere in portions of their visual field of which, through inattention, they are not currently conscious, now have a model for what, according to the disclosure theory, the unsensed portion of the physical world is like in itself, quite generally — even in regions beyond the confines of the brains of sentient beings, where awareness, as far as we know, never intrudes. (Lockwood, 1989, 164)"

"Are there any familiar properties that might offer a suitable analogy? *Colours* might be the very sort of ambivalent properties we seek.... On a commonsense conception, colours are resolutely non-mental properties that reside on the surfaces and also permeate the hidden insides of physical objects — like red apples with white interiors. Although the colours of objects are perceivable by minds, common sense does not make it a condition of an object being coloured that someone be currently experiencing it, nor that anyone ever will. Colours, on this view, do not depend on conscious awareness, or mentality of any sort." (Coleman, 2017a, 2017b, 9)

Such focus is far from coincidental. In point of fact, the very notion of Edenic qualities is based on a feigned naïve realism with regard to visual (in particular colour) qualia. This makes perfect sense inasmuch as sight is the most *objective* of senses, providing us at any given moment with impressions of a simultaneous manifold of entities persisting and coexisting "out there": that is, apart from and independent of ourselves, our actions, and our immediate past and future.¹⁵ This objective character of visual perceptions makes it possible, if not natural, to suppose that colour qualia could exist unperceived. But the idea that visual qualia provide a *general* template for a proper analysis of all phenomenal qualities is seriously flawed. Despite the dominance of sight in human phenomenology visual qualia are unique and rather exceptional in their degree of objective appearance (see Jonas, 1966, 147); they stand at the edge of a broad phenomenological spectrum which they do not adequately represent.

¹⁵ By saying this I do not mean to imply that the *process* of visual perception is passive and reactive rather than action-oriented and anticipatory. My point is simply that more than any other sensory modality vision presents us with a world that *appears* stationary, stable, objective, self-contained-in-the-present-moment, and detached from us observers. The significance of this point is stressed eloquently by Whitehead (1929/1985, 121–124), as well as by Hans Jonas (1966, chap. 6).

We can imagine a world adorned with unexperienced colours — and perhaps with greater difficulty, unexperienced sounds and scents. But can we imagine a world populated with unexperienced tactile or proprioceptive phenomenal qualities, let alone the phenomenal qualities constitutive of affects, sensations, or moods?¹⁶ Pinch yourself in your arm and attend to the feeling: the cascade of pain, with its wave-like peak and trough of intensity; the stress, the relief; the gradual transformation of the reigning sensation into vague, diffused, and attenuated experience; the elicitation of affective reactions in places other than the pinched surface itself (I, for one, feel wavelike sensations on the side of my neck), etc. Could the phenomenal qualities constitutive of such an experience exist Edenically, that is, as wholly objective, wholly unfelt qualifications of things? A negative answer to this question appears most natural, and it undermines the putative generality of an Edenic view of qualities.

Supporters of PQ may protest that their Edenic analysis is directed not at familiar macro-level phenomenal qualities but, rather, at fundamental micro-phenomenal qualities, of which we know next to nothing. Still, the rub is that the Edenic conception of such micro-phenomenal qualities takes its cue from the notion of Edenic colour primitivism, thereby presupposing that the primordial array of micro-phenomenal qualities are, in a crucial sense, *analogous* to colour qualia. This means, in turn, that if colour qualia could exist unexperienced (and I'm not suggesting they do!) the same must hold for our quasi-colour micro-qualia; and likewise, if colour qualia are such that, when experienced, they appear stationary, stable, self-contained-in-the-present-moment, detached from the observer, etc., the same must be true of our quasi-colour micro-qualia. Contrapositively, our protagonist micro-qualia must *not* manifest a character analogous to that of pain sensations or of feelings of joy: they must not be the kind of qualia that could not possibly exist unexperienced; or equivalently, they could not possibly be the kind of qualia that, when experienced, are revealed to be such that their existence necessitates an experiencing subject. This puts a serious strain on the theory since it implies that all macro-level qualia are ultimately reducible to colour-like micro-qualia. Yet, there is little reason to believe such reduction is possible.¹⁷

Apart from the strangeness of the idea that affects and moods could be reduced to colour-like qualia, the real problem is that it seems to put the cart before the horse. If the basic qualia are colour-like one would expect primeval consciousness to consist of colour-like experiences. More specifically, it follows from the disclosure view

¹⁶ Remember, our question does not concern such power properties as impenetrability or disruptiveness of the skin, for this would be like asking whether it is possible for the reflectance properties of surfaces to exist unexperienced. Rather, asserting the existence of Edenic colors is equivalent to asserting the existence of wholly unfelt *qualia* of hardness, pain, etc.

¹⁷ In addressing the question how could widely heterogeneous macro-qualia be grounded in a common core of micro-qualia Coleman appeals to Hartshorne's (1934) *continuum hypothesis* which views "phenomenal qualities, of all kinds, as on a continuum" (Coleman, 2017a, 2017b, 264). However, a putative continuity along the spectrum of phenomenal qualia does not imply the stronger claim that all macro-qualia are grounded in color-like micro-qualia. As a matter of fact, Hartshorne, good Whiteheadian that he was, was almost certainly convinced otherwise, namely, that "the basis of experience is emotional" (Whitehead, 1933/1967, 176).

that the first conscious beings endowed with the capacity to reflectively access the intrinsic qualities of their own inner states would thereby experience the phenomenal character of such states. And since PQ identifies the intrinsic nature of matter with Edenic, colour-like, qualities the natural prediction is that the phenomenal character of the ensuing experiences would be colour-analogous. Hence, if it turns out that primeval consciousness is predominantly affective rather than colour-like this constitutes a strong argument against PQ.

And indeed, there are compelling reasons to believe that the most basic of experiences are affective in character (i.e., bodily sensations, emotions, moods, and feelings of various sorts). There is, to begin with, strong anatomical and neurophysiological support for this hypothesis. The primal forms of experience detected in brain research (e.g., primary emotional affects and homeostatic interoceptions) appear to be sub-cortical, having much to do with brainstem regions such as the hypothalamus, the PAG, and the superior colliculus (see Damasio & Carvalho, 2013; Solms & Panksepp, 2015). These primeval types of experience are predominantly affective, and there are solid grounds to conclude that they are not only the most primitive known forms of consciousness but also undergird all other conscious states (Damasio, 2010; Panksepp, 1998; Shewmon et al., 1999). In contrast, visual experience is predominantly cortical, with colour being associated with such regions as, for example, V4 and the fusiform gyrus (see, e.g., Zeki, 1993). Thus, insofar as we use the brain as a guide to the archaeology of consciousness we find no support for the notion that affective experience could be grounded in more primitive colour-like experience.

Moreover, visual qualia — colours, shapes, textures and their reciprocal orchestrations — are the emblems of articulate discriminations: precise, stabilized, and refined. They furnish the constitution of the "mental solids" of experience (Solms & Panksepp, 2015, 169), that is, of spatial object-presentations available for cognitive manipulation (Kosslyn, 1980; Shepard et al., 1982). Such clear, distinct, and sophisticated discriminations are unlikely candidates for the role of basic experience. From a dynamic evolutionary and developmental perspective they must be seen as end-products of a long process of elaboration and consolidation. They are the spectacular outcome of humble beginnings in murky territories. Consequently, they must be preceded by a simpler and more basic type of experience: diffusive, fleeting, vague, yet at the same time effective and causative. The point is stressed by Leibniz (1704/1916) with his famous emphasis on confused and non-apperceived perceptions; and it plays a key role in the philosophy of Whitehead who warns us of the mistake (which he attributes to Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, amongst others) of taking perception in the mode of "presentational immediacy" (his term for clearly delineated visual perceptions) as primary. Against such temptation, Whitehead urges that "clearness in consciousness is no evidence for primitiveness in the genetic process; the opposite doctrine is more nearly true" (1929/1985, 173; cf. Jonas, 1966, 149).

In support of this contention consider first that clear and distinct visual experiences depend on highly-structured organs of perception and mechanisms of information processing. For example, even the simplest of colour vision depends on the ability to distinguish a range of wavelengths which, in turn, is contingent on

the evolution of eyes with a sufficient variety of photoreceptors and a sufficient number of variedly tuned opsins (light sensitive proteins).¹⁸ Likewise, the ability to form visual images is contingent on having lensed eyes capable of high-resolution focus (to say nothing of other optical, anatomic, and neuro-cognitive adaptations).¹⁹ Such organs and mechanisms are unavailable to many organisms and microorganisms which, to all appearances, are nevertheless subjects of experience (flatworms and limpet snails are two examples of animal species that enjoy neither colours nor visual images). What *is* available to all experiencing organisms are various means to *feel* their surroundings, conspecifics, and their own bodily states. Feelings, by which I mean experienced sensations, emotions, valuations, affective states, and moods, are the *lingua universalis* of experience.²⁰ All animals enjoy (or suffer) feelings of various sorts, and at least some of the following feelings associated with:

- The familiar senses of sight, sound, taste, smell, and the mechanical touch of various media (solids, water, air).
- Other senses alien to humans (e.g. echolocation, sensitivity to the Earth's magnetic field)
- Kinaesthetic and proprioceptive adjustments.
- Interoceptive sensitivity to homeostatic energy fluctuations (e.g., hunger, thirst, salinity levels).
- Temperature (heat, cold) and sensations of wetness and dryness.
- Toxicity
- Pleasure and pain
- Drives and emotions (e.g., fear, rage, seeking, play)
- Saliency valuations (emotional tags — for good or ill — of things, situations, and anticipated outcomes)
- Strivings and the exertion of effort
- The quenching of thirst and hunger
- Feeding and excretion
- Respiration
- Desire and sex
- Frustrations, encouragements, and the joy of consummation

Even prokaryotes respond adaptively to a large set of biologically meaningful internal, environmental, and social variables: light, temperature, salinity, PH level, energy concentrates, oxygen and other gas composition, magnetic fields, specific informational molecules, fluctuations of internal states (energy taxis), and collective quorum sensing (Ben-Jacob et al., 2011; Lyon, 2015; Neelson, 2011). There is a growing tendency among researchers to ascribe cognitive abilities and even consciousness to bacteria and other single-celled

¹⁸ See, e.g., Fernald (2000).

¹⁹ See Nilsson (2013), and Schwab (2018).

²⁰ Notice that "feelings", as used here, must not be confused with the "phenomenal feel" of which philosophers are fond of talking. The reason is that the latter expression designates *any* experience (including, quite often, color experience), and bears no specific reference to *affective* phenomenology.

organisms,²¹ but the important point for our present purpose can be stated hypothetically, namely, that to the extent that microorganisms experience anything at all we have every reason to suppose that their experience is predominantly affective: they *feel* their natural surroundings, fluctuations in their own internal conditions, and the active presence of colony members, in an evaluative-motivating manner, and they act in accordance with what they feel.

While it is true that the origins of visual perception are also ancient — light sensitivity being an important modality in the life of many microorganisms and all metazoans — it is important to bear in mind that in its simple manifestations, for example in the eyespots of marine zooplanktons (see Jékely et al., 2008) or the eyecups of planarian flatworms (Campbell et al., 2009, 595), visual information is limited to such variables as the intensity and direction of light. Such information does not serve to specify a clearly delineated and colourfully embroidered external layout but rather to guide orientation and movement towards, or away from, sources of biologically meaningful affordances (e.g., food sources, noxious substances, predator infested environments, etc.). Hence, here again, we have reason to suppose that if the stimuli are phenomenally felt at all they are experienced as valence markers in the form of affective tones.

In sum, it transpires that far from being colour-analogous primordial experience is affective, evaluative, and subjectively involved. In Whitehead's words "[t]he basis of experience is emotional... the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given" (1933/1967, 176). As argued above, there is little reason to suppose that the phenomenal *qualities* grounding affective experience could exist unfelt, or, in other words, untethered to subjective experience. It follows that Edenic qualities are a poor foundation for a genetic analysis of experience. In being emphatically non-subjective they offer no proper means for understanding affective experience, which, if I am right, is the basic form of experience in the only systems we *know* to be conscious: ourselves and other biological organisms. The idea that phenomenal consciousness could be properly analyzed as reflective access to Edenic qualities derives its appeal from an *ocular bias* in the analysis of experience, which, in turn, is rooted in the prevalence of sight in Human phenomenology. But such bias involves a fallacy of proximity, namely, the misconception of taking that form of experience which is closest to us, at the present apex of evolution's pyramid (so to speak), to be representative of experience at large, hence to be applicable to the pyramid's faces and base. It was, again, Whitehead who saw that such mode of thinking involves "an inversion of the true constitution of experience" (1929/1985, 173).

7 Numb Recipients Cannot Feel

The last section was dedicated to a critique of the panqualitist contention that Edenic qualities constitute the basis for an adequate explanation of the phenomenal character of experience. The present section takes issue with the complementary

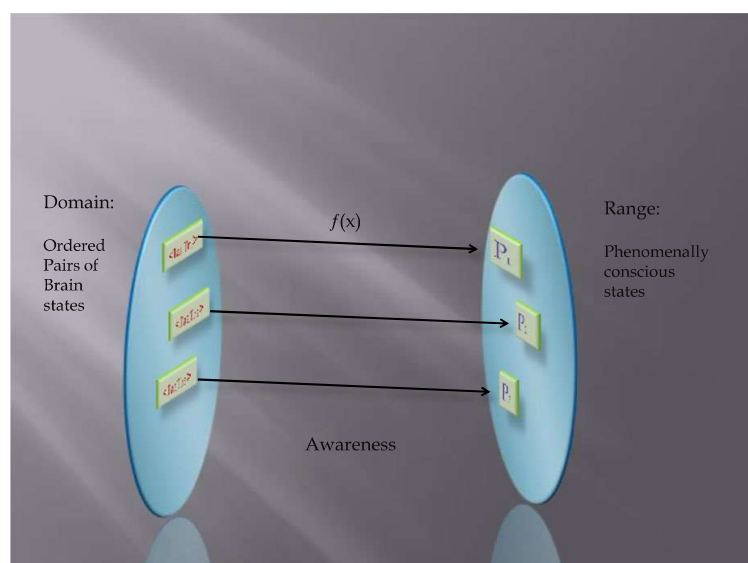
²¹ Ben-Jacob et al. (2011) speak of bacterial semantics and communication; Lyon (2015) proclaims the existence of valence; while Margulis (2001), as well as Baluška and Reber (2019), are bold enough to ascribe their tiny subjects of study the possession of sentience and awareness, or, in short, consciousness. For a more cautious assessment see Fulda (2017).

idea that phenomenal consciousness consists in *awareness* of Edenic qualities, where awareness is understood as a strictly *non-phenomenal* process which nonetheless effects *conscious disclosure* of phenomenal qualities.

Consider first the basic facts according to PQ (as stated in Section 3). By PQ₂ we know that the instantiation of Edenic qualities is not itself sufficient for the realization of experience; while PQ₃ and PQ₄ inform us that phenomenal consciousness consists in a non-phenomenal awareness of intrinsic Edenic qualities. Noticeably, on this view, the role of awareness is to make the intrinsic nature of Edenic qualities known or, as Lockwood (1989, 162) puts it, *disclosed*. Furthermore, the disclosure relation is presumed to hold between higher-order tracking states and lower-order target states (recall Fig. 1). In other words, higher-order tracking states enable *consciousness* of the intrinsic qualitative nature of lower-order target states. We can think of the awareness relation as a many-to-one function which takes as arguments ordered pairs $\langle Ta_i, Tr_i \rangle$ each of which consists of a target state and a tracking state, respectively, and assigns to each ordered pair a phenomenally conscious state, P_i , as a value (see Fig. 2).

There is only one problem with this elegant theoretical scheme, to wit: that it lacks the means to make sense of the existence of phenomenally conscious states under its purview. Where, in this landscape, one might wonder, could conscious experience take root? Where is that space, that designated range of our function, in which phenomenally conscious states reside and have their being? Recall that, ultimately, the disclosure process must terminate in a phenomenally-felt inner reality, i.e., in an occurrent sentient state of some sort. Otherwise, all talk of *phenomenal* consciousness is futile. But what could possibly sustain such occurrent sentience? Let a tracking state track a target state and access its innards as much as you will, and call this process "awareness" if so you wish, but where in all of this is there elbow room for genuine sentience and true lived experience? Panqualityists would have us believe that consciousness consists in awareness of Edenic qualities. But since the instantiation of Edenic qualities does not entail phenomenal consciousness (if it did, the position would collapse to panpsychism), and since panqualityists deny

Fig. 2 Awareness as a *function* that takes ordered pairs $\langle Ta_i, Tr_i \rangle$ of target states and tracking states as its arguments and generates conscious states as values (notice the purely functional status of awareness)



that awareness carries any phenomenological load of its own, we may rightly wonder what it is about this process which delivers us from insensate darkness and into the light of consciousness.

Imagine Spector, the first creature ever to establish reflective access to the intrinsic nature of (some of) its own qualitative states. There is no denial that the little chap was transformed in the process, but what was the nature of the transformation? Did Spector come to *experience* the intrinsic nature of its own constitution? The problem with this interpretation is that the poor creature appears to be lacking the means to experience anything at all. Its intrinsic makeup is constituted entirely of Edenic qualities, and we know of such qualities that their instantiation is utterly insufficient for the realization of experience. But then, how could Spector sense and feel, or respond with affective tones to external provocations and internal modifications? The newly-established capacity to reflectively access the intrinsic makeup of its own constitution would elicit correlative changes in Spector's tracking states, and perhaps further upstream in the creature's brain and body, but how could any of these changes amount to a felt experience? After all, the ensuing stream of events would be just like any other internal occurrence in Spector's body: an unfolding order of intrinsically insensate qualities. Whatever it is that Spector gains, informationally or cognitively speaking, as a result of its novel capacity for reflective "awareness"²² must ultimately be embodied as a qualification of its intrinsic constitution; it must take the form of newly impressed patterns on the "wax", the substance, constituting its concrete makeup. But since this substance is made of Edenic qualities, and since the instantiation of such qualities is insufficient for the realization of sentience, we seem to have no reason at all to suppose that Spector's "awareness" of its own quidditas would culminate in conscious experience.

The problem with the panqualityist picture, then, is that the concrete medium in which the theatre of consciousness is supposed to unfold is intrinsically insensate. It is a *numb* substance deprived of the power to feel anything at all. A panqualityist world is, primordially, one in which nothing feels and nothing is being felt. Take any of the fundamental inhabitants of such a world and subject it to various trials — toss it, squeeze it, boil it, freeze it, etc. None of these manipulations shall elicit any sentient response, none shall be experienced. But if the underlying reality is that of total insentience, how could reflective access, or higher-order representation, be of any help? Consider again Spector, a creature sophisticated enough to access its own intrinsic makeup. When target states are accessed by tracking states some information is relayed upstream to the tracking states themselves or beyond; but wherever it is, we know per hypothesis that the receiving end is utterly insensible and, as such, cannot *experience* the input (or, if you prefer, cannot present the input experientially). In short, the "disclosed" message is bound to fall on deaf ears.

Panqualityists try to have it both ways. On the one hand, they postulate a qualitative base which, they argue, is sufficiently rich to ground all experience. On the other hand, they cannot allow this qualitative base to exemplify sentience or, in

²² Here and below I use quotation marks in order to single out the fact that this strictly functional concept of *awareness* is a technical one and need not be confused with a commonsense understanding of awareness, an understanding that tends to view awareness as being constitutively involved with phenomenal consciousness.

simple terms, to feel. But lacking sentience, it cannot experience — and no amount of reflective access could change this basic state of affairs. This, I submit, is the most direct and most effective way of pointing the trouble with the disclosure approach to consciousness. The conceivability of panqualityist zombies — stressed by Chalmers (2017a) and Goff (2017) — supervenes on the more basic fact that numb recipients cannot feel.

8 A Coda on the Searchlight Metaphor

Having stressed the shortcomings of the disclosure approach it is interesting to notice that the same conclusion can be reached by focusing on the notion of disclosure itself. On any proper operational understanding of disclosure it can be readily seen that it *presupposes* conscious experience and therefore cannot serve as the trigger for the emergence phenomenal consciousness. To disclose, to uncover, to reveal: such acts are strictly contingent upon the reality of experience. It is only against an existing background of consciousness that something, anything, could be disclosed. The uncovering of a statue, the ceremonious unveiling of King Kong to an astounded crowd of viewers — these are acts of disclosure precisely because they operate against a sentient receptive background, namely, the consciousness of observers. Remove conscious receptivity from the picture and the very idea of disclosure evaporates.

In this respect, the metaphor of the searchlight (which, as seen above, advocates of PQ are fond of employing) is revealing. The image of consciousness as a searchlight illuminating the contents of our minds is seductive, and it has deep roots that go at least as far back as John Locke who, in his *Essay*, famously equates consciousness to “the perception of what passes in a man’s own mind” (1690/1995, 68). In the hands of supporters of the disclosure view this turns into the idea that phenomenal consciousness consists in an inner scanning of the intrinsic qualities of one’s brain states. But the deficiency of the idea that consciousness operates like a searchlight can be easily discerned. A searchlight sweeping the night landscape illumines certain portions of the nearby terrain but it cannot reveal a single fact about the surroundings unless someone (some sentient being) is situated behind the instrument, at the receiving end of things, and *experiences* the disclosed scenery. Eliminate the sentient recipient doing the surveying and all talk about disclosure becomes woefully inadequate. But such elimination is precisely what PQ is at. For on the panqualityist account experience arises out of a strictly non-phenomenal awareness of one’s “inner landscape”, where awareness is equivalent to a searchlight and the inner landscape it penetrates is equivalent to the terrain illumined by the searchlight. Hence, what sets this scenario apart from genuine cases of disclosure is the complete *absence* of sentient reception. The searchlight (awareness) and the landscape (Edenic qualities) are taken to do all the work sufficient for sustaining disclosure, and rather than depending on consciousness such disclosure is tasked with the job of generating it.

If nothing else, the elimination of sentient receptivity constitutes an abuse of the disclosure metaphor, leaving us bereft of a clear idea how anything remotely similar to disclosure could possibly take place under such circumstances. But worse

still, it is simply senseless to talk about phenomenal qualities being disclosed in the absence of any terminal point wherein the relevant contents are revealed, or presented consciously. Yet, as argued in the previous section, all that PQ has to offer in this regard are *numb* addressees incapable of sentient processing. The situation is roughly equivalent to one in which the person behind the searchlight is blind, or blindfolded, hence unable to enjoy the illumined landscape; or alternatively, where instead of a normal person the observer is a phenomenal zombie incapable of experience. None of this does justice to the idea of disclosure, and for a good reason, viz., that in taking disclosure to be constitutive of consciousness PQ reverses the proper order of explanation.

At this juncture, I imagine that some readers would be inclined to protest that the appeal to sentient receptivity, and to the analogy of observers behind the scenes, is suspiciously reminiscent of the ill-reputed notion of a *homunculus*. Reminiscent it may be, but no homunculi are presupposed. What follows from the proposed analysis is not that there are little persons inside our brains, observing displayed contents, but rather that receptivity is a constitutive aspect of consciousness. It is a mistake to identify consciousness merely with the act of grasping that which is given in experience, for consciousness is also, equally and correlatively, the *medium* (or substrate) of experiential givenness. Put differently, it is a mistake to focus excessively on the *accusative* mode of consciousness, that aspect of experience which consists in the grasping of intentional objects, while neglecting consciousness' role as the *dative* of experience, i.e., the receptive medium in which, and through which, intentional objects are being disclosed.²³ Contra Locke, consciousness cannot be reduced to acts of *perception*, whether of "external sensible objects" (1690/1995, 59) or of "the operations of our own minds within us" (Ibid, 60); for it is equally and correlatively a medium of *reception*, or to borrow a loaded term from Plato: a *receptacle*.

The implications of this departure from Locke and his many successors are wide and far reaching, but a more systematic exploration must await another occasion. What concerns us here has to do with but one implication, to wit, that no amount of representational access (understood here as a strictly functional process which consists in the tracking, processing, and relay of information) could compensate for the absence of sentient receptivity. Access does not beget sentience, nor does it institute genuine disclosure. The notion that informational access sustains an explanation of phenomenal consciousness is unsound, and it is no more tenable under a panqualityist guise than it is under orthodox type-B physicalism.²⁴

²³ I find the grammatical contrast between the *dative* and the *accusative* case rather helpful in clarifying what I am at. The accusative case is the direct object of a transitive verb, the dative is the indirect object. For example, in the sentence "I gave the boy the clock", 'the clock' is the accusative case while 'the boy' is the dative case. The clock is the *object* of the action; the boy is the action's *recipient*. Building upon this duality, and translating it to the realm of experience, I maintain that consciousness has two complementary aspects or modes: a *perceptive* aspect (or accusative mode) which consists in grasping intentional objects, and a *receptive* aspect (or dative mode) which consists in serving as the subjective medium for the unfolding of experiential content.

²⁴ The relations between sentience and informational access is discussed in an earlier work of mine (see Shani, 2014).

9 Conclusion

In conclusion, it behoves us to fix our gaze and observe once again why the formula 'Edenic qualities + reflective awareness' falls short of generating experience. This could be done by noting that precisely because the instantiation of Edenic qualities does not necessitate experience in the first place no system whose intrinsic makeup consists entirely of such qualities could become phenomenally conscious in virtue of turning upon itself and accessing its inner constitution. Put differently, the problem is that the epistemic value of such introspective operation, its representational yield, must itself be embodied in the form of instantiated Edenic qualities. But since the instantiation of such qualities falls short of necessitating experience we are driven back to the starting point, and consciousness remains firmly beyond our grasp. The spectre of panqualityist zombies is but an *indirect* affirmation of this basic predicament. That we have independent reasons to deny the primordial status of Edenic qualities, as argued in Section 6, is yet another reason for skepticism. Thus, if there is a valid course midway between physicalism and mentalism, it has yet to be discovered.

Acknowledgments Many of the ideas discussed in this paper were presented in various forums over the last half a decade: the annual meeting of the *Korean Society for Analytic Philosophy* in Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul (May 23, 2015); the *Canadian Philosophical Association* in Ottawa (symposium on "Russellian Monism, Explanation, and the Metaphysics of Consciousness", May 31, 2015); *International Conference on Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Mind*, Huaqiau University, Xiamen, China (May 25, 2019); *Consciousness and Fundamental Reality: Lessons from East Asian Philosophy* (international conference held at Sun Yat Sen University, China in June 12, 2019); the *Science of Consciousness (TSC) 2019*, Interlaken, Switzerland (June 28, 2019); and the *South East-Asian Mind and Metaphysics Research group*, (Online forum, October 28, 2020). I thank the audiences at these events for their useful and thoughtful comments. Thanks are also due to Donovan Wishon for helpful comments on a much earlier draft of this paper.

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