

First-Person Reflection and Hidden Physical Features: A Reply to Witmer

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ABSTRACT: My response to Witmer comes in three sections: In the first I address concerns about my book's blindsight thought-experiment, remarking specifically on the role imagination plays in it, and my grounds for thinking (in the face of Witmer's doubts) that a first-person approach is valuable here. In Section Two I consider the relation of the thought-experiment to theses regarding possibility and necessity, and Witmer's discussion of ways of arguing for the impossibility of "Belinda-style" blindsight, despite its apparent conceivability. Finally, in Section Three, I consider Witmer's suggestion that we build on my discussion of blindsight to support the thesis that consciousness is a hidden physical feature.

1. Why a First-Person Approach?

I am grateful to Gene Witmer for his detailed and scrupulous remarks on *The Significance of Consciousness* (Siewert, 1998). (All pages references will be to this

book.) I must apologize for not responding in commensurate detail to every interesting turn in his intricate discussion. However, that must not be taken to show any lack of appreciation for his clear and fair-minded comments.

In my book, I ask the reader to conduct a thought-experiment in which one takes up the point of view of a hypothetical subject of experience, Belinda -- a spontaneous, amblyopic, reflective blindsighter. In asking you to conceive of the situation from her point of view, I ask you to conceive not just that there is such a person as Belinda -- I ask you to conceive of being such a person. In this sense my thought-experiment involves a first-person approach. And there is a serious question -- pressed by Witmer -- about the rationale for taking the first-person approach I propose. The reason I give in the book (as Witmer notes) is to avoid certain dangers I say come with taking up a "third-person point of view" in considering the case. But whatever dangers this may involve, one might wonder (as does Witmer) -- why not avoid them simply by refraining from imaginatively inserting oneself into the situation at all, either as the subject, or her observer? Why not conceive of the scenario of Belinda's blindsight from *no* point of view within it? This may well seem preferable -- for the use of imagination I appear to invite suggests special problems of its own, and in any case arguably cannot get us what we want, since, concerning many crucial features of the situation, there is nothing to do by way of imagining being someone in that situation, beyond what would be done simply by conceiving of someone in that situation. So why not simply consider the matter thus: describe the blindsight case, and examine this description as best one can for hidden incoherences? If one finds none, then one can declare that one has successfully conceived of the case as described, and count this as evidence that one has indeed described a possible case.

To answer these concerns, I need first to clarify a couple of points about my procedure. Note that I do recognize that there is a sense in which (imagistic, iconic) imagining (e.g., visualizing, auralizing) is distinct from conceiving or thinking (pp.98, 263-4). And I state that it is specifically *conceiving* that I require in my thought experiment. Now it is plausible to say that when you conceive of being a person in this situation (as distinct from just conceiving of there being some person in a situation of that description), often (maybe inevitably) a certain exercise of visualization will be involved: one will visualize in a manner that resembles the visual experience a person in the situation would have, from her spatial perspective. And that is to be contrasted with a visualization resembling the experience that would be had by someone observing that person in that situation. So: if conceiving of being Belinda involves such an exercise of "centered" visualization, then part of what one will do here is visualize in a way that corresponds to having visual experience in one's right field, while lacking it of things on one's left (which ordinarily one would be able to see).

However, it is crucial here to avoid certain misunderstandings. First, I do not require any special talent on the part of the reader to produce particularly vivid or complete visualizations. I make no explicit requirement that visual imagery be a part of the exercise, and I do not think it is necessary for my purposes to take a stand on whether use of imagery is essential to it. Also I do not assume that every relevant aspect of the

situation described will be something that one can visualize (or otherwise image) as opposed to merely conceive of. And finally I do not ask that one conceive of the situation in such a thorough way as to furnish a determinate answer to just about any question one might decide to ask about Belinda or her experience. (I mention this last point in part because I have encountered some (apparently rather unfriendly) critics (not Witmer!) who dismiss my thought-experiment as unfeasible, because they think I must be asking them to imagine "what it is like" to be Belinda (which way of phrasing the request, incidentally, I do not employ). And they take imagining what it is like to be someone to require a very rich and far-reaching imaginative identification with her, which they regard as beyond their (and maybe anyone's) powers.)

One might accept my clarifications here, but still press the question: why do I not just save myself the trouble of fending off the misunderstandings they are meant to avert, and not bother with the first-person approach at all? I have two reasons. One of these I mention in the book (and Witmer discusses); the other is not in the book, though I will try to explain it here. First let me say a word or two to clarify the rationale I do offer in the book. The danger I see stemming from a "third-person approach" to the blindsight thought experiment does not essentially involve any centered use of mental imagery: it's not that I fear something bad will happen because we visualize Belinda sitting in a chair with the screen of flashing X's and O's before her. Rather, I worry that in trying to get clear about what is meant by 'conscious experience,' one will be, if only covertly, guided by this question: what evidence would an observer have for attributing a given type of experience to someone, or for denying that she had it? My worry is that one will be tempted to give an account of what one means by 'conscious' in terms of what one would count as evidence for third person attributions of conscious experience. One may reflect, "When do I think someone else's states are conscious? When she reports that she has them, or uses them to make rational choices or inferences. So it seems that I *mean* by 'conscious state' then, is a state that one can report or use in self-avowed reasoning." If one starts from some such thought, it can seem attractive to conceive of consciousness in a behaviorist fashion, or in terms of some manifest functional role. Thinking along these lines would then, I believe, lead us away from a proper understanding of phenomenal consciousness.

Why do I believe that some are tempted to think along these lines? It is because there are philosophical views that, by my lights, neglect phenomenal consciousness, in favor of some manifest role, and I find it plausible to suppose that the appeal of these views is explicable because there are reasons why some are drawn to confusing *the occurrence or absence of experience* with what *warrants third-person attributions and denials of its occurrence*. What are those reasons? First, notice, in ordinary contexts, we are sometimes inclined to explain or clarify the use of a term by reference to conditions under which we would have warrant for applying it. We are thus generally at some risk of confusing what it is for a term to apply truly (or not), with what warrants our thinking it does or does not apply. Now, when one adds to this general disposition to collapse fact and warrant, certain methodological commitments regarding the study of mind, of the sort that inspired behaviorism, and a worry that dualism and skepticism are to be avoided at all costs, it won't be too surprising if one conflates the phenomenal, experiential facts (e.g.,

its looking or feeling some way to someone) with conditions of third-person warrant (e.g., subjects' ability to discriminate sensory stimuli, or report or express their own mental states). This confluence of motives has, I think, helped give behaviorist and functionalist theories of mind their appeal.

But now, one may wonder, if a third-person perspective on the mind can mislead in this way, why would adopting a first-person approach make us any better off? As long as there is the possibility of getting it wrong about one's own experience, won't there also be a fact-warrant gap in the first-person case that one risks collapsing? In response: I allow that first-person claims that one has or doesn't have a given experience are not infallible. But I do think one is not in danger of confusing what warrants first-person judgments about conscious experience with conscious experience itself, because *that* identification would not be entirely mistaken. For I think that the distinctive first-person warrant or "evidence" that one has a given experience lies, in part, in the experience itself, and the distinctive first-person warrant that one doesn't have it is, in part, due to the fact that one doesn't have it.

Of course, you may not share these views of mine, and you may doubt that third-person perspectives lead to mistakes in the way I have speculated. My belief that they do helps explain why I proceed as I do, but it is not essential for me to defend that belief, in order for it to be legitimate for me adopt a first-person approach in considering Belinda.

However, this still leaves a basic concern of Witmer's unaddressed. Suppose there is, as I say, this danger of adopting the third person point of view, which doesn't attach to a first-person approach. Why not avoid it just by leaving "point of view" out of it altogether? I admit that the rationale I offer in my book for the first-person approach is not adequate to answer this question. I now wish to supplement those remarks.

We may deprive ourselves of the sorts of philosophical lessons I think can be derived from Belinda, in a manner that does not (at least directly) reflect some "third-person" bias. Suppose we approached the matter as Witmer suggests: we simply consider the description and examine it for conceptual incoherence. There is a way of doing this, I believe, which will turn up no conceptual incoherence, but which will, nonetheless, not involve our successfully conceiving of there being such a blindsighter as Belinda. This would make use of the idea (mentioned by Witmer) that we have a purely "recognitional" concept of experience, and that when one considers the situation in which a subject has ability A, but not experience E, one understands 'E' by making use of this recognitional concept. On this basis, one concludes that Belinda's blindsight is "conceivable," but only in this sense: the possession of the recognitional concept of experience employed just does not include the ability either to affirm or deny, with legitimacy, the presence or absence of entailments among relevant statements, or the possibility of situations described. (Someone might add: such a concept does not enable one to "rule Belinda out, a priori," simply because its possession doesn't enable one to do much of *anything* a priori.)

So, on this view, all we can say here is that one has no right to say Belinda is conceptually impossible, based on use of this cognitively *impoverished* recognitional, first-person concept of experience. We may acknowledge that Belinda's blindsight is not inconceivable, using the first-person concept of experience, but still think that she is inconceivable or conceptually impossible, when we utilize any *other* concept of experience, one which *is* pertinent to the task of trying to decide whether some state of affairs is conceptually possible. Alternatively, we might argue that Belinda's not being inconceivable, using first-person concepts of visual experience, gives us no reason to resist the idea that she is, in some more-than-nomological, "metaphysical" sense, quite impossible. Thus merely proceeding in the way Witmer suggests with the blindsight cases could undermine their use in trying to assess theories of consciousness.

Now I do not in fact believe that the evident lack of conceptual incoherence in Belinda's description is due just to some such poverty in the concepts (the "phenomenal" or "subjective" concepts) we employ, when engaging in first-person reflection on experience. And we would be mistaken, in my view, in this way to drain first-person reflection of philosophical significance and condemn to uselessness a specifically first-person concept of consciousness, in an assessment of theoretical accounts of what it is. Of course, I do not ask everyone just to assume that what I say would be a mistake is in fact a mistake. But, lest we be led into some (at least potentially mistaken) deflationary assessment of the significance of Belinda's conceivability, on the basis of some theory of first-person or phenomenal concepts that yields that result, we should first try to be sure we are considering Belinda's description in a manner that really involves the first-person or phenomenal concepts that are actually available to us.

Therefore, I propose we explicitly begin, not with a theory about our concepts and their limitations, but with an effort to engage in the very thought experiment that I urge on my readers, which involves a "first-person approach" in the sense I explain there. I am not saying that just by doing this we can show the deflationary view of first-person concepts of experience would be a mistake. But I do offer this as an alternative to proceeding in a way that begs the question in favor of the deflationary view. Rather than just say that Belinda is conceivable (or at least not inconceivable) on the basis of a view of our concepts that delivers that result while insuring its theoretical irrelevance, I ask that instead you affirm her conceivability just by employing the relevant concepts yourself in conceiving of the blindsight situation.

At this point, someone may say, "OK, I can cooperate with you to this extent -- I can take up Belinda's point of view in imagination. That is: I can visualize things as I believe they would look to Belinda. I can visualize in a way that corresponds to having right field visual experience of X's and O's, and so on, while visualizing in a way that correspond to having no visual experience of left field stimuli -- that is to say, while not visualizing anything to the left at all." But here I would need to emphasize: my injunction is to *conceive* and not merely *imagine* the situation from the subject's point of view it (that is, not merely conjure relevant mental imagery). To conceive of Belinda's having right field experience, while lacking left field experience, it is not enough just to visualize right field stimuli, while not visualizing left field stimuli. To conceive of an absence of visual

experience is not the same as intentionally abstaining from the corresponding visualization. So, when you conceive of being a spontaneous reflective blindsighter, you should conceive in a way that does not consist entirely in constructing (or refraining from constructing) certain mental images.

However, someone might here insist: "Then I simply cannot do as you ask. For in trying to 'conceive' of being someone with Belinda's blindsight, I employ no concept of conscious visual experience that puts me in a position to say one way or the other whether it follows from having Belinda's discriminatory powers toward left-field stimuli that one has conscious visual experience of them -- that they look some way to one."

Now, if *you* say this, I would ask first: what positive reason do you have to believe your concept of experience limits you in this way? Second: are you really willing to accept the evident consequences of this position? For instance, do you really want to say you have no basis on which to object to, say, an extreme behaviorist analysis of the concept of experience? Suppose someone says that, on such an analysis the Venus flytrap's response in seizing its prey, and the sunflower's phototropic response, entail that they have, respectively, tactile and visual experience. It appears that you could not then object that there is a sense of 'experience' in which you think of yourself as having experience, but can conceive of these plants' lacking any experience when they make their responses. For on the deflationary conception of experiential (or first-person or phenomenal) concepts, such conceiving does not bear on the question of entailment.

Let me summarize the point of this section. Witmer raises the concern that my first-person approach to the thought-experiment is unnecessary to avoid the pitfalls I wish to avoid through it, and leads to problems of its own that attend the use of imagining, as distinct from conceiving, in the conduct of such conceptual exercises. My response is that I do not deny -- I even insist upon -- a distinction between conceiving of a situation, and forming mental imagery. Though I by no means forbid you to do the second, I definitely ask you to do the first, in conceiving of being someone with Belinda's blindsight. Also I ask you to conceive of the matter from the subject's point of view not only (as mentioned in the book) in order that you will not fail to distinguish sufficiently the conditions that warrant third-person affirmations and denials of experience from the fact of its occurrence or absence. I also, by this strategy, wish to keep readers from employing an understanding of what is involved in conceiving of Belinda-style blindsight that would render it unsuitable for mounting the kinds of theoretical challenge I think emerges from it. To consider Belinda's situation as Witmer suggests, from no point of view within it, leaves us open to interpret the conceivability of Belinda in a manner that would preempt its philosophical significance. However, if we see our task here as that of conceiving of being someone with her blindsight, we may succeed in using a first-person concept of experience that is not purely recognitional and logically vacuous. Of course, someone may deny that we can succeed in doing this, and hold that our first-person concept of experience is indeed cognitively impoverished. But then one needs to explain why that view is maintained, and how one can accept its evident consequences, when there is, evidently, a more reasonable alternative.

2. Do We Really Conceive of Belinda's Possibility?

Suppose we do not neutralize my thought experiment with some thin conception of our first-person concept of experience that would make it irrelevant. Still there are other strategies one might try for arguing, in the face of the apparent conceivability of Belinda's blindsight, that she is, after all, in some more-than-nomological sense, quite impossible. One might say the problem is not that the concepts we employ are inherently ill-suited to modal reflection, but that we are confused about, and misdescribe, just which possibility we focus on, in deploying them. Witmer discusses some suggestions of this nature that I now wish to remark on.

First, I want to make a couple of comments on the dialectical situation at this juncture. My opponent here faces the task of justifying the claim that what it seems we can conceive of, is after all impossible (either conceptually or metaphysically), and of explaining why the necessity in question is one to which our grasp of the relevant concepts leaves us oblivious. It's not that I assert a possibility my opponent denies. Rather, I say I can conceive of a situation my opponent would say is impossible. And I would deny that it is impossible -- which isn't quite the same as asserting that it is possible. (For such denial is consistent with withholding commitment about modal facts.) So the burden of proof rests more heavily on my opponents in this situation. Moreover, it is not enough for them just to propose a re-description of what I am doing when I profess to be conceiving of Belinda, and point out that they can use this description to state a possibility, even while they hold Belinda's blindsight to be impossible. They also must *justify* the claim that this correctly describes what I am *really* doing when I (benightedly) claim to be conceiving of blindsight in which the subject exercises abilities A without experience E. This is an important point to which I will return.

Now Witmer would allow that certain ways of trying to discharge the burden are not successful, which appeal to an analogy with the superficial appearance of natural kinds. And he notes what my response would be to a critic's accusation that I wrongly assume that if x lacks the thought that x has left field visual experience, then x must not have left field visual experience. The criticism would be that I merely conceive of the possibility of this missing thought, and confuse this with the possibility of the missing experience. However, Witmer thinks there is a further suggestion that poses a bit more of a challenge to me (which, nonetheless, he thinks ultimately surmountable). The proposal is that I mistakenly assume that if x has the thought that x lacks left field visual experience, then x must not have left field visual experience -- and this leads me to conflate the (genuine) possibility of Belinda thinking she lacks an experience, with the (spurious) possibility of her lacking it.

Witmer is right that I would respond to the first suggestion (that I hold that lack of a thought entails lack of a visual experience) partly by denying that I hold this view. For it would be contrary to things I explicitly claim (e.g., on p.208), to hold that higher-order thought is essential to experience. And, assuming that there is some presumption in favor

of my first-person claims about what I do and don't believe, the burden is on my opponent to provide evidence that I somehow covertly believe the very proposition I sincerely deny believing. However, I want to say much the same thing about the further deflationary move Witmer suggests. I would also steadfastly deny that your thinking you lack an experience entails that you lack it. For I would, and do, recognize the possibility of "hysterical blindness," and I would acknowledge the possibility of philosophically motivated denials of experience, in my sense, coming from people whom I believe are, nonetheless, every bit as visually conscious as I am (see p. 179). And here as before: if someone would wish to maintain that I covertly believe something, even while I sincerely deny believing it, and recognize its inconsistency with other things I profess sincerely to believe, then a heavy burden lies on this opponent to show that I am so deeply confused about my own beliefs.

But there is more to say here. Suppose, counterfactually, I *did* believe that thinking you lacked experience guaranteed you did lack it. Would my opponent then have a case that I am mistaken in thinking I can conceive of Belinda, as I described her, and all I am really conceiving of is a consciously sighted subject who falsely denies her experience? Not at all. For the suggestion would be that I attempt to conceive of Belinda's blindsight by conceiving of someone thinking she lacks an experience, and then assuming that if she thinks she lacks it, she must lack it, and inferring from this that -- well, by golly, she must lack the experience then. But that just is not the procedure I follow. The procedure I adopt is the one I explicitly describe in framing my first-person thought experiment, which relies on no such inference. And again, what is the evidence that, despite my protestations, this is what I am really doing? Similarly, I could hold (as in fact do not), that higher order thought is essential to experience, without thereby relinquishing the right to say I am conceiving of Belinda. I would say that while I do believe that Belinda's lack of a thought that she has an experience guarantees that she lacks it, I do not rely on an inference from this thesis in conceiving of Belinda. I do not conceive of her lacking the thought, and then infer that she lacks the experience. What would be the evidence that would establish I do?

So, I maintain that there is no evidence that I am covertly making the inferences the critic would impute to me here-and there still wouldn't be, even if I were to become convinced of the assumptions on which the inferences depend. What's more, there seems to be some evidence *against* the critic's accusation. For I ask myself: if I were to suspend judgment altogether on the truth or falsity of the premises on which the relevant inferences depend, would I then be disinclined to assert that I can conceive of Belinda-style blindsight? The answer is: no.

The conclusion I wish to draw in this section is this. Witmer considers attempts to argue that Belinda is impossible by maintaining that when we think we are conceiving of her spontaneous amblyopic reflective blindsight, really all we're conceiving of is something else, which we misdescribe in this way. The idea is that our claim to conceive of Belinda, as described, stems from one of two false assumptions, either: (a) that lacking a thought about your experience guarantees you lack the experience; or (b) that thinking you lack an experience guarantees you lack it. Witmer does, I believe, accurately point out genuine

weaknesses in such arguments, and I welcome the support this provides my view. But I would bolster my position further. Not only does my honest and consistent disavowal of (a) undermine the idea that my accepting it gives me some misconception about what I conceive of, when I say I conceive of Belinda. My similar disavowal of (b) deprives my critic of warrant for asserting that (b) dupes me into some conflation or faulty inference. And I would go a bit further still by pointing out that, even if I did falsely believe either (a) or (b), this would not show that I was incorrect in thinking I had conceived of Belinda's lack of experience (and not merely either: her lack of a thought, or her thought of a lack). For, to make that case, one would need to show also that I do not recognize a distinction between: conceiving of (1) Belinda's lack of visual experience; and conceiving of (2) her lack of a thought or her thought of a lack. Or else one would need to show that I think I can conceive of (1) by inference from (2). But there is apparently only evidence against the hypothesis that I am blind to such distinctions or rely on such inferences, and there is none in its favor.

3. Is Belinda the Physicalist's Friend?

What about Witmer's discussion of the prospects for a hidden feature theory of consciousness? It was instructive for me to see how one might try to turn my discussion of blindsight to help frame a physicalist theory of consciousness of the sort Witmer favors. The aspect of my discussion that seems most crucial here is this. In the argument I maintain that the concept of consciousness is not just the concept of a certain manifest functional role, on the basis of a thought experiment in which the manifest role of a certain kind of conscious visual experience is mostly filled by something other than a phenomenally conscious experience. I say "mostly" filled, because I do not maintain, as would those who argue from "absent qualia" that one can conceive of the exact same manifest functional role that is filled by the experience, being filled without it.

I do not claim complete functional equivalence of the phenomenal and non-phenomenal states is conceivable, because there are certain attitudes -- for instance, certain judgments about one's own experience, and desires to have (or not to have) experience of a certain phenomenal character -- that it seems to me one could not have, if one never had the relevant sort of phenomenally conscious experience. If the capacity to give one such judgments and desires is considered part of the functional role of experience, than it is an aspect of the role that couldn't be matched by some non-phenomenal substitute. This does not rescue functionalism, however, because those aspects of what phenomenal experience gives us that could not (I think) conceivably be gotten otherwise do not furnish anything with which we can reasonably identify the difference between having a certain conscious visual experience and lacking it, in a case where we make the two otherwise as functionally similar as I am willing to claim we can conceive them to be.

Witmer does not wish to challenge this. Instead he wants us to focus on this ineradicable residuum of functional difference (as I'll call it), and see how it might be put to work in his physicalism. I think the suggestion, ultimately, comes to something like this. We

agree that the difference between having a conscious experience and lacking it does not consist in some manifest functional difference. But then the suggestion is: it does consist in what is *responsible* for that functional difference. And that is something that can be clear to us a priori, if we do find it inconceivable that a blindsighter could have *all* of the manifest abilities Connie would have. This isn't to say that our concept of phenomenal character is simply the concept of whatever accounts for these abilities. But our concept does set (in Witmer's phrase) "a priori constraints," according to which phenomenal character is responsible for abilities that could not otherwise be had. Now if (as seems plausible) what is responsible for the abilities in question is some hidden physical feature of the brain, we have reason to *identify* the phenomenal character of experience with such a hidden feature. Though of course the discovery of just what hidden feature that is will require empirical investigation, and the knowledge acquired upon that discovery will be a posteriori.

Witmer's discussion here is complex and subtle. And I think he goes some way towards his goal of making intelligible his physicalist thesis that the first-person concept of consciousness sets the stage for an a posteriori identification of phenomenal features with hidden physical features. Still, I have doubts about how much we can use conceptual investigations that take off from the blindsight thought experiments to *justify* Witmer's physicalist identifications. Maybe that is just because of what underlies my sense that there is some conceptually ineradicable functional difference between visual consciousness and its lack. So let me try to spell this out a bit, in hopes that this will make the situation clearer.

My view (and here I am only asserting it, not defending it) is that there are first-person judgments we make about our experience that involve the use of first-person (or phenomenal) concepts of experience -- concepts brought to the fore by conducting the process of reflection that starts with paradigmatic instances of phenomenal consciousness in one's own case, and leads to various hypothetical scenarios in which conscious experience is contrasted with its absence -- as in my blindsight stories. And I also believe we can make the first-person judgments employing these first-person concepts of experience only if we are capable of a certain kind of demonstratively expressible thought about our own experience and its character: (e.g.) "This feels this way" (where the first 'this' refers to one's experience, and 'this way' picks out some type in principle recognizable by me on its recurrence (say, a specific sort of "burning, nervous" feeling in my arms). For it is on the basis of such thoughts that we are able to consider paradigms of conscious experience in ways that exhibit our grasp of the first-person concept of experience.

Now granting me for the moment that something like this is true, it seems we may have reason to deny the possibility of an anti-physicalist blindsighter of the following sort. This blindsighter would not only have Belinda's capacities, she would also have the hidden feature that in Connie is at least nomologically sufficient to generate the visual experience Belinda lacks (so she is to this extent like Witmer's character "Melinda"). But she would have more than Melinda. This blindsighter's visual states also enable her to have all the same manifest abilities (including those for first-person judgment and

demonstrative thought) that Connie's conscious visual experience gives her. The possibility of a blindsighter of this sort -- allow me to call her 'Impossilinda' -- would be ruled out, since (ex hypothesi), nothing *but* experience of the phenomenal character Connie has could, on reflection, conceivably give one the capacity for the experiential judgments that those with conscious experience in fact have with regards to it.

But now, from this am I entitled to take the further step, to hidden feature physicalism? To do so, it seems that I need to reason in something like the following manner. The capacity for the reflective judgments that we balked at attributing to Impossilinda is (necessarily) due to our having phenomenal experience of the sort they would be about. But we make such judgments due to hidden physical features of our brains. Therefore the phenomenal character of experience is one and the same as some hidden physical feature of the brain.

My problem here is that it is not clear that the manner in which the phenomenal character of experience is responsible for the capacity for experiential judgment is the same as the manner in which my neurobiology is responsible for this. Perhaps the *phenomenal character* enables me to judge insofar as it puts in place a conceptually necessary condition, whose presence, together with other factors, can thus explain why I was able to judge in a certain way on a certain occasion. Perhaps *hidden physical features*, on the other hand, enable me to judge, just by being nomologically sufficient for the occurrence of a judgment of that type (together with experience of the relevant phenomenal character). But then we cannot (without equivocation) use the notion that both the phenomenal character and the hidden feature enable me to judge as a basis for justifying the physicalist identification. For what it is for each to be responsible for my ability to judge differs in the two cases.

Another way to bring out my difficulty here: it seems to me that acceptance of something like my reason for ruling out Impossilinda is compatible with rejecting physicalism on the grounds of some "knowledge argument" or the possibility of Chalmers' zombie world. (My zombie twin would not share my capacities for forming and employing phenomenal, first-person concepts and judgments, though of course he would speak as if he had!)

It may be that Witmer does not mean to suggest that reflection on our concept of experience will do any more by way of justifying the identification of manifest phenomenal features with hidden physical ones than I have allowed here. And perhaps he would allow that further work is needed to show that the sense in which the phenomenal character of experience is (a priori) "responsible for" experiential judgment or thought is univocal with that in which hidden physical features are (a posteriori) "responsible for" experiential judgment or thought. But then at least perhaps I have located a challenge for him to meet, in offering a fuller justification of his version of physicalism.

In any case, it does seem that physicalists of Witmer's stripe should want to be friendly to my blindsight argument in order to defeat manifest functionalist views to which they are opposed. So at least my view has that much aid to offer him. And he has helped me to see

that I need more fully to work out, defend, and consider the implications of my views regarding the nature of specifically first-person or phenomenal concepts of experience.

References

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