

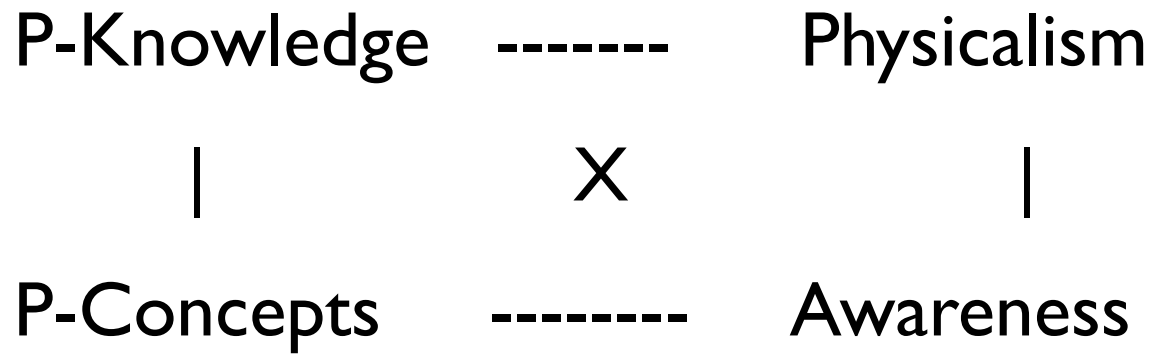
Reflections on Phenomenal Concepts

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Four Key Themes

1. Phenomenal Knowledge
2. Phenomenal Concepts
3. Awareness/Acquaintance
4. Physicalism/Dualism

Four Vertices



Connecting the Vertices

- Knowledge to dualism (Jackson; Michael, Derek, Torin, Par)
- Knowledge to concepts to physicalism (David, Esa, Benj)
- Knowledge to (concepts to) awareness to dualism (Martine, Joe, Dave, Philip; Geoff)
- Concepts and awareness (Daniel, Helen)

I. Phenomenal Knowledge

Inflating Phenomenal Knowledge

- Inflationist: phenomenal knowledge is
 - new
 - underivable (Torin)
 - substantial (Joe, Dave)
 - revelatory (Martine, Philip)

Deflating Phenomenal Knowledge

- Deflationist: phenomenal knowledge is
 - subjective (Benj)
 - objectual (Michael)
 - not new or underivable (Derek)
 - not revelatory (Esa)

My View

- I think it's very plausible that phenomenal knowledge is underivable, objective, substantial propositional knowledge.
- I also think it's revelatory, but this isn't a dialectically strong premise for an argument against materialism.
- But underivability and substantiality suffice for dialectically strong arguments.

2. Phenomenal Concepts

- Concepts can be abstract entities or mental representations.
- For current debate what matters are mental representations (of phenomenal properties)
- Specific types of representations of phenomenal properties (or: types of grasping of abstract phenomenal concepts)

Mary's New Concept

- When Mary leaves the room she acquires a new representation of p-properties:
 - grounded (introspectively?) in p-state
 - non-deferential (with mastery)
 - a direct phenomenal concept
- [Likewise for her phenomenal knowledge]

Accounts of Phenomenal Concepts

- Direct phenomenal concepts are
 - recognitional (Esa), demonstrative (Michael), expressive (Benj), copies (Derek)
 - constitutive/quotational (Dave, David, Helen)
 - revelatory (Martine, Philip)

Do P-Concepts Explain P-Knowledge

- Many materialists: these features of p-concepts explain p-knowledge
- Some: deflate p-knowledge (...)
- Some: p-concepts explain new/substantial/objective p-knowledge (Esa, David; Geoff)

My View

- My view: direct phenomenal concepts epistemically rigid, grounded in acquaintance and constitution.
- No physicalist has yet adequately explained their epistemic rigidity and their role in contributing to substantial knowledge.

3. Awareness/ Acquaintance

- Most: in experience subjects are aware of external properties (e.g. redness)
- Many: in experience subjects are aware of phenomenal properties (e.g. what it's like to see red)

Ubiquity of Awareness

- Subjects are always aware of phenomenal properties (Dave, Martine, Philip, Torin, Joe)
- Subjects are sometimes aware of phenomenal properties (Daniel, Geoff?)
- Subjects are never aware of phenomenal properties (Benj, Michael?)

Kind of Awareness

- Awareness is merely structural (Esa, Geoff?)
- Awareness is substantial (Dave, Joe)
- Awareness is revelatory (Philip, Martine)

My View

- I think: we at least sometimes have awareness of and attention to phenomenal states, not grounded in prior concepts or knowledge.
- Phenomenological case against strong transparency
- I think it's (abductively) plausible that we always have this awareness and that it's revelatory -- but I wouldn't take this as a premise.

4. Physicalism and Anti-Physicalism

- Physicalists: Benj, David, Derek, Esa, Geoff, Michael
- Anti-physicalists: Dave, Joe, Helen, Martine, Philip, Torin
- Agnostic/Neither: Daniel, Par

Awareness and Materialism

- If awareness is revelatory, there's a quick argument against materialism.
- But even if awareness is merely substantial (nondescriptive, nondemonstrative awareness of nonstructural qualities of experience), there's a big challenge.

Challenge

- How can materialism explain substantial nonstructural awareness of phenomenal properties?
 - Some deny the awareness (Benj, Esa?)
 - Others want to explain it (David, Esa, Geoff?)
-- but details of the explanation are elusive!
 - Biggest residual challenge for materialists.

My View

- My view: materialists can't explain substantial awareness/knowledge of consciousness.
- Explaining this requires some sort of irreducible relation of awareness.

5. Phenomenal Concepts without Materialism (or Dualism)

- The phenomenal concepts literature has largely been defined by its connection to materialism and dualism.
- But there are many issues here that are hugely important even independent of that connection.

i. Semantics for Phenomenal Concepts

- What is the content of phenomenal concepts (and meaning of phenomenal expressions)?
 - Expressive (Benj)
 - Fregean, Russellian? (Some physicalists)
 - Epistemically rigid 2D content (Me)
- [Q:Are there Frege cases for p-concepts?]

ii. Metasemantics for Phenomenal Concepts

- Metasemantic question: How do phenomenal concepts get their contents? In virtue of what do they refer to phenomenal qualities?
 - Helen: attentional/dispositional
 - Esa: causal?
 - Me: acquaintance/attention/constitution/inferential

iii. Chemistry for Phenomenal Concepts

- What are the most fundamental phenomenal concepts?
- What is the structure/composition of more complex phenomenal concepts?
 - Concepts of total or atomic states?
 - Perceptual, cognitive, ...
 - Phenomenal or protophenomenal?

My View

- My view: the most fundamental phenomenal concept is that of (phenomenal) awareness.
- This combines with concepts of specific (Edenic) qualities, e.g. (perfect) redness
 - E.g. phenomenal redness = awareness of Edenic redness
 - Then: chemistry of Edenic concepts?

Role of Phenomenal Concepts

- Odd tension:
- The phenomenal-concept/mind-body literature stresses the isolation of phenomenal concepts from other concepts.
- But there are deep connections between phenomenal concepts and other concepts

Phenomenal and Perceptual Concepts

- E.g. *phenomenal redness* is closely connected to *redness*. Constitutively, especially given representationalism/relationism.
- So one's account of phenomenal concepts should be tied to a corresponding account of perceptual concepts.
- Quotational/recognition/demonstrative accounts of perceptual concepts?
- Direction of priority?

Other Concepts

- Perceptual concepts are presumably closely/constitutively connected to most scientific/theoretical concepts.
- Phenomenal concepts play a constitutive role in many other mental concepts, and thereby in social concepts and so on.
- Arguably: we need to understand phenomenal concepts to properly understand all concepts

Imperialist Conclusion

- So: phenomenal concepts may be the most important concepts of all.
- Time for phenomenal concept theorists to broaden their horizons and conquer the world!