



Undergraduate assignment feedback form (to be completed by marker)

Student Name: <u>Wendie Kossek</u>	
Module title:	Student number:
For completion by marker:	
Comments: This is a very interesting essay that presents a novel approach to the essay question. The use of literary examples that have been related to theory are illuminating, & reveal a subtle & perceptive understanding of the issues at stake. Further, the discussion on psychoanalysis displays knowledge of relevant literature that goes beyond the reading provided for the module. Indeed, the essay is well researched, & this research is effectively incorporated into the essay, as well as well-referenced/documentated. There are, however, bits that needed further clarity, & the punctuation needs closer attention. But these weaknesses are outweighed by the essay's novel approach - an approach which	
Marker's signature: <u>RJF</u>	Date: <u>23/11/20</u>
Provisional mark: <u>70</u>	
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remains remarkably focused on the task set. I say 'remarkably' for such an approach I could very easily veer away from key issues, but you've done an excellent job at ensuring your discussions further an answer to the question.

Wendie K

HPPH6027- Essay Two- Humans, Animals and Machines: Exploring the Philosophy of Mind

What Implications does the 'hard Problem' of consciousness have for investigating the relation between body and mind?

The initial approach of this essay will be to define the 'hard problem' of consciousness. Philosophical writing will be reviewed to establish what the problem is and the effect this has on the relationship between the body and the mind. Firstly, David Chalmers ideas will help to demonstrate the hard problem of consciousness and that the problem in relation to consciousness is that consciousness cannot be reduced, that an alternative way of explanation needs to be found. This essay will also view and critique the ideas of panpsychism, which Chalmers refers to in an online lecture, and refer briefly to Spinoza's doctrine of Pantheism. Nagel's ideas on subjective experience will be examined and critiqued, as presented in his paper *What is it like to be a Bat?* Nagel posits that we can never know the conscious experience of another, that it is subjectively unique to the subject, and that in order to understand consciousness fully we must know what it is like to be the one having the conscious experience, we are only ever aware of our own conscious experience. The use of imagination and empathy will be explored as possible answers to know what it is like to have the consciousness experience of another. Reference will be made to Kafka's *Metamorphosis* this will demonstrate the relation between imagination and empathy when viewing the relationship between our own mind and body, and the relationship we have with other minds and bodies. It will not be the purpose of this essay to examine Descartes' dualistic approach to mind and body, which appears to be the birth of the mind/body problem, however, investigations into the relationship between body and mind will be weaved into the essay as a constant reference to the hard problem of consciousness. It will be revealed in the essay that issues presented by the hard problem of consciousness remain unresolved, and will remain so, as Chalmers points out, until either science has developed a method by which we can find concise indicators of consciousness, through a functionalist or reductive method, or to accept conscious experience as a unique phenomenon which is measured by itself, much as time is measured by minutes passing. The essay will conclude

J. For
Nagel,
we...

T;

J.H

* Italics for titles of books, films, edited collections, etc

that there are no answers to be found to the hard problem of consciousness, but the implications on the relationship between mind and body can be resolved from a subjective point of view; though in Nagel's terms this may be a 'view from nowhere' it does at least give us a starting point. It is my belief that the problems concerning the relation between mind and body are best seen from an embodied perspective and I will use Merleau-Ponty's philosophical ideas to support this conclusion.

Excellent introduction

*The Hard Problem of Consciousness*¹

The hard problem of consciousness is related to experience. "When we think and perceive, there is a whirl of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect ... This subjective aspect is experience."² Bodily sensations, the experience of the senses, stream of conscious thinking, emotions and the quality of feeling, the differing sounds and smells we experience – the qualia, all these sensations, mental and physical make us subjects of experience. The hard problem of consciousness poses the following questions: How is it that we are subjects of experience? How is it that we experience the quality of a colour, the sound of a musical note? What is it like to be the one having the experience? In his chapter on the Hard problem of Consciousness in *The Blackwell*

Companion to Consciousness David Chalmers asks: "How can we explain why there is something it is

¹ The problems of consciousness refer to a multitude of phenomena, the explanations of these problems fall into the categories of 'easy' and 'hard'. Easy problems can be explained in terms of neural mechanics or computational by cognitive science, i.e. phenomena related to the differing states of being awake or asleep, relating to and categorising stimulus from the environment, the relaying of mental states, access of internal states, focusing the attention etc. Put simply, consciousness of a mental state can be reported by verbal expression or deliberate action, a mental state is deemed conscious when it is internally accessible. We use consciousness as a descriptor when someone is awake, and all these states can be described and measured scientifically through language; contrasting behaviours are sufficient to recognise these states. Though some elements may not yet be fully understood, there is no reason to think cognitive and neurosciences will not be able to answer and explain the easy problems of consciousness satisfactorily in the future. See *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness* p225.

² Max Velmán and Susan Schneider eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) p226.

like to entertain a mental image or to experience an emotion?"³ We know feeling does develop from physical basis, but there is no explanation as to why, or how, we recognise our inner life, and, how physical processes influence it. No objective reason can be found to explain the effect; however, we instinctively know that it does. External stimuli influence the internal processes in a unique way to each unique individual. To use the expression consciousness appears ambiguous and indeed mysterious. "[N]oting the strange intangibility and ineffability of subjectivity,"⁴ at this point the only expression we can hang our hat on could be 'subjective consciousness'; the fact that only the subject having the conscious experience is aware of the conscious experience is feasible, would then the expression subjective consciousness, instead of consciousness, be less ineffable? ^{J.W} Both subjective and consciousness have defined meanings, we can look them up in the dictionary, but a subjective consciousness is no answer for the hard problem of consciousness. Hard problems require hard facts, and the facts about conscious experience and what it is like to be having that conscious experience are as elusive as any unknown phenomena. For Chalmers no conclusions or explanations are to be found in the sciences, either the cognitive or neuroscience. ^S Are we to yield then to the concept of consciousness as the 'ghost in the machine'⁶, or to Cartesian dualism, a mind quite distinct from our senses, more like something etheric and unknowable in line with the concept of God, to be felt as truth rather than known, to be the subject without objective reasoning? Chalmers refers to this as the extra ingredient and posits the question of what that might be? ^{ga} And, why would this extra ingredient account for conscious experience? Chalmers points out the various proposals made in nonalgorithmic processing, neurophysiology and quantum mechanics, these are examined ^{J.T} by Chalmers and the most popular is quantum mechanics, and yet no conclusions are to be found

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

⁵ Nagel's Ideas on subjective consciousness in reference to what it is like to be something will be viewed later in the essay. ^{Good Signposting}

⁶ This concept was put forward by Gilbert Ryle to emphasise the dualistic idea put forward by Descartes of the mind and body as two quite distinct things. See Ryle's article in *Western Philosophy, An Anthology*, edited by John Cottingham. ^{J.}

there.⁷ Chalmers goes on to clarify that even the concept of vital spirit, by this I think he is referring to Descartes idea of the mind/soul, is unacceptable in explaining conscious experience, observing physical behaviour and function gives indicators of what it might be is perhaps an hypothesis from which to start, but no explanation is to be found by these methods.⁸

Panpsychism and Pantheism

Chalmers offer two theories,⁹ the second of them is Panpsychism.¹⁰ Panpsychism is the doctrine that spacio-temporal things have an inner mental aspect, this is not to say that all inanimate objects have minds, it is to say that the inner mental aspect is a matter of degree, which will vary according to the thing itself in relation to conscious experience; qualia and subjectivity would also apply.¹¹ This would be difficult to equate, we must accept that Human beings would have more consciousness than a stone, but that all things in the world have some form of conscious experience and that the mental is uncaused, and not made up by the physical, this requires a leap of faith. I find the idea to be intriguing, it does have an appeal, even if there are no obvious signs of an inner life, we cannot take it for granted that a thing does not have one, even if that inner life is unexplainable. In taking this leap of faith I hear the echoes of Spinoza's doctrine of pantheism, although this does differ from panpsychism in that the pantheist believes in a divine nature in all things, not just conscious experience. Panpsychism takes God out of the picture, however there is an element of faith in the

⁷ It is not the purpose of the essay to examine these different scientific fields of enquiry as none of them yield answers or give any believable theories. It is my opinion that this would establish the physical role of consciousness and not address the problem of how it arises, how physical processes elevate to experience, and for me something that is not physical cannot be explained in the terms of physical theory.

⁸ Velmans p233

⁹ The first theory is that consciousness is something which cannot be reduced and that an alternative way to explain conscious experience is to start from the ground up, with a unique kind of measuring stick (as referenced in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*). This unit of measurement will apply to consciousness experience alone, much as we measure time by minutes, hours and days and so on, or comparisons by degree and distance by miles and length of string by yards, we may indeed discover how long is a piece of string, or that we may measure string with string. This appears to be a method that may work to refine a quantitative experience but not a qualitative experience. Will we ever know how deep the red is in Roger's red hat, and how that redness appears to Roger?

¹⁰ https://www.ted.com/talks/david_chalmers_how_do_you_explain_consciousness accessed 10th November 2020

¹¹ Ted Honderich ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford University 1995) p641

well explained

belief of something which cannot be measured or known objectively. For the pantheist, God is in all things and all that exists is attributed to God. Hegel interpreted this not as atheism (which was a common belief at the time,¹² that God was materialised in all things, whereby reducing God to matter), but that God is not only spirit and that God can be conceived of as in matter.¹³ There are connotations here to Cartesian dualism: the mind and body as two distinct substances within the same subject. Both Spinoza and Descartes bring a God like entity into the argument of conscious experience. If one has a strong belief in the divine, be it God or a universal force, then the hard problem of consciousness dissolves; the answers lie within the belief system held, conscious experience is a connection to the divine, where all remains sacred. The distinction of mind to body is dissolved, as the body, as Descartes proposed, is a house for the mind, and all inner life and conscious experience resides within the mind along with reason; I leave my emotions and senses within the body to be reduced and measured by sensation, and expressed in physical behaviour. Descartes uses God to dissolve the problems with his theories, but for me Spinoza brings God into his theories to strengthen the enquiry into what it is to be a conscious being, there is room to explore and develop our understanding, he gives a rock from which we may leap into further enquiry.

→ This latter claim not necessary and the argument - You could say this.

While there...

→ This bit needs further explanation.

Nagel and Kafka, Bats and Beetles

Nice subtitle!

→ Or rather Dis God (E clear E distinct ideas) seems to contribute to the problem, whereas Spinoza's God... (seems to dissolve no problem)

We have briefly touched on the subject of subjectivity; I would now like to explore that further and give reference and support to the qualities of mind which assist us in developing our understanding of the subjectivity of the subject. The subjective view is seen as a view from nowhere, we might stand in the middle of a desert and say: 'I am here', where exactly is that? Impossible to pinpoint. Nagel explores these ideas in his paper 'What is it Like to be a Bat?', we can look at all the examples presented but none are analogous to enlighten the unique relationship of the mind to the brain¹⁴.

Clarity needed here

¹² Spinoza was excommunicated for the 'horrible heresies which he practised and taught' at just 24 years of age in 1656. See Genevieve Lloyd's *Spinoza and the Ethics*.

¹³ Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London, New York: Routledge 1996) p17

¹⁴ Nagel, Thomas, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?' *The Philosophical Review* 83:4 (1974) p436

Nagel goes on to state that reductionist accounts do not give answers to the relationship between mind and body, and that consciousness cannot be reduced down to physical states; he uses the term 'subjective character of experience' and that as we examine this results are impossible to find in physical accounts and rightly concludes "The reason is that every subjective phenomena is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view."¹⁵ How is it that one can truly know what it is like to be something unless one becomes that thing, and is part of the things conscious experience, mind, body and soul? What Nagel states makes for good argument, so are we to give up, or state that it is in God's hands, that we can never know what it is like to be something other than that which God has made me, that which I am. Nagel states:

"To the extent that I could look and behave like a wasp or a bat without changing my fundamental structure, my experiences would not be anything like the experience of those animals"¹⁶

Nagel makes sound argument here and I agree that I could not know what it is like to travel on wings instead of legs, and rely on echo location instead of my eyes, but I like to think that I can understand what this is like, that through my own sensations, empathy and imagination I can gain insights. Kafka gives such insights; his novella 'Metamorphosis' sees the overnight transformation of a young man Gregor Samsa into an insect. The reader is exposed to the inner life of a man whose body has been transformed, and slowly his mental life begins to adapt to the new body, he becomes more insect like as the story progresses. "Gregor's inner life is transfigured into a consciousness that accords with dualism's philosophical distortion of it."¹⁷ This quote encapsulates the implications the hard problem of consciousness has on the mind/body relationship. Gregor's inner life is not transfigured,

¹⁵ Ibid p437

¹⁶ Ibid p438

¹⁷ Anniken Greve 'The human body and the human being in "Die Verwandlung"'. In Franz Kafka: Narrative, Rhetoric, and Reading. (Ohio State University Press, 2011) p43

Rephrase

You might want to state that you are presenting the argument from the pansychist position here (if that is what you're doing, re: reference to God)

only his body, however the impact this bodily transfiguration has on his inner life is understood and evident within the text and disproves the idea of dualism as Gregor's consciousness is impacted by the transfiguration. At the beginning of the story Gregor, in his new body, hears the rain on the window and it depresses him as it would on any other day, an external stimuli has the same effect on his inner life despite the transformation of his body. Gregor is aware of an itch on his stomach "He tried to feel the place with one of his legs, but withdrew it immediately because he felt a cold shiver whenever he touched it."¹⁸ This extract from the text allows the imagination to sense Gregor's physical and mental state at the same time, his inner repulsion as he feels his leg against his body, a mind and body united in the experience. As the story develops we see Gregor's inner life begin to change and he begins to think of himself as an insect, much as in Jekyll and Hyde, the Hyde character takes over, emotion over reason; the physical driving the mental states and inner life, which is opposing to the concept of the inner conscious experience steering physical actions.¹⁹ The change in Gregor is relayed by his sister, who initially senses that Gregor is still the same person inside changes her view when she expresses that if the creature were truly her brother he would have left the family home "If it were Gregor, he would have realised long ago that it is impossible for human beings to live with a creature like that and he would have left of his own accord."²⁰ A good storyteller facilitates the imagination and our empathy so that we may gain insights that reason does not permit. With the changes in their physical bodies neither Dr Jekyll nor Gregor Samsa survive their ordeals, their minds are corrupted by physical transformation. Conscious experience is subjective, but I believe it is influenced by the physical elements of our existence both in the external world and the expressions of other beings, and our own physical bodies. The view of Merleau-Ponty is explained in Hamlyn's book *Metaphysics*.

¹⁸ Franz Kafka 'Metamorphosis' in *The Essential Kafka* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2014) p460

¹⁹ This is in reference to Descartes analogy of the mind akin to a pilot which steers a ship – the body. ✓

²⁰ Kafka p505

Descartes
could agree
with this

"Ponty's view, mediates and provides a common ground and meeting place for all our individual pasts and futures which are tied to our individual consciousness. Thus, despite the intrinsically subjective nature of temporal becoming that subjectivity is transcended through the lived present which we can all share and our bodily existence makes possible"²¹

It is the conclusion of this essay that a conscious experience is conjoined with a bodily experience which is subjective by nature, however, this can be experienced by others through empathy and imagination. Those lacking in the ability to imagine or empathise will not share in the experience in the same way. The hard problem of consciousness remains unresolved, and the connections to the mind/body problem are not to be ignored. I believe we find our conscious experience within the bodily experience and *vice versa*. In our coming into existence as a subject with a subjective conscious experience we live every moment through a bodily experience and the two are forever entwined, and each give influence ^{to} the other. ✓

²¹ D. Hamlyn, *Metaphysics* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) p146 ✓

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