

## The Perspective of Consciousness

### -- The Superiority of Searle's Naturalism to Materialism and Dualism

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#### Abstract

On the issue of consciousness, materialism and dualism both seem to show great problems, However, Searle's naturalism may solve this problem well. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the defects of materialism's and dualism's understanding of consciousness, and points out how naturalism solves these defects.

#### Keywords

Searle; Naturalism; Consciousness.

#### 1. The Understanding of Consciousness in Materialism and Dualism

First of all, what is consciousness? Consciousness is a state of sentience and awareness. And it needs to be defined—1. Any state of consciousness, such as pain and worry, is independent of the subject of experience and cannot be felt by other subjects in the same experience. For example, I can never feel the pain when you are hit by a hammer, so consciousness is internal. 2. Consciousness exists only for its subject of experience, so consciousness is the first person. 3. Consciousness makes the subject of experience have a real feeling nature, so consciousness is qualitative. In a word, it is an internal, first person and qualitative phenomenon.

So how does materialism think consciousness? First of all, we need to make it clear that materialism represents a kind of mechanical physics, which represents that the physical world follows a universal physical laws and have stable mechanical mechanisms.

In materialism, as the first person, consciousness itself is not real existence, the real existence is the physical phenomenon of the third person objectification.

Consciousness will be reduced to an objective physical process through ontology, that is, a process of brain nervous system. Behind the image of consciousness is the precise and regular operation of the brain. Modern materialists even think that computers can fully simulate the operation of consciousness, that is, AI can be fully realized, and the brain operation is the same as that of human beings.

Under this assumption, because the physical world has its own natural law, our consciousness can't influence it [1]. This obviously cannot explain how we "change the world", after all, human subjective initiative plays a huge role in the transformation of the world. We have created many things that didn't exist before, which are missing from the physical knowledge given to us by the outside, for example we have assembled wood into tables, invented computers and so on. All are not an illusion.

Under materialism, because all phenomena will be objectified by the third person, we fall into a puzzle about the third person consciousness from the first person perspective. For example, "I am thirsty" will be reduced to a brain phenomenon "the feeling of thirsty is that some kind of brain nerve wave appears in my brain", which obviously does not conform to our intuitive sense

of consciousness. At the same time, the first person and the third person are both very important perspectives. For example, from the perspective of the first person, an object is "square and angular"; but from the perspective of the third person, an object is "composed of molecules", then it will be reduced to molecules, and the integrity of the object will disappear. So with two perspectives at the same time, the cognition of objects is complete.

In addition, materialism can't explain why objective knowledge can't make up for the lack of some subjective perception. The Australian philosopher, Frank Jackson has an optical chromatography experiment: suppose a neurobiologist named Mary knows all about optics and chromatography, but she lives in a completely black-and-white environment. So, the situation is that she knows all the knowledge within the scope of materialism, but she still can't really perceive "what color really looks like". It seems that something is beyond the knowledge.

Therefore, the major problems of materialism are: first, our consciousness itself is not real and will be reduced to neural activities, but there is a certain gap in physical knowledge relative to consciousness; second, our consciousness cannot affect the physical world, but in fact, we can transform the world; finally, in any case, the theory of materialism is obviously different from our real feelings, --We can realize our consciousness. These show that there are problems in materialism 's understanding of consciousness.

So behind the problem of materialism, can we think that "consciousness itself is real, and totally different from the physical world"? That is the view of consciousness held by dualism. In the eyes of dualists, consciousness and physics are thought as distinct categories. If something is of consciousness it cannot be physical, if something is physical it cannot be of consciousness.

This makes a strict demarcation between consciousness and physical world--they are not related. So how does consciousness exist? we need to know that consciousness itself needs a cause. In fact, the cause of consciousness is the process of neural activity, not the "mysterious power". Otherwise, you can't explain why it comes into being.

Secondly, dualism involves the key issue of "how does consciousness work in the physical world". Since dualism does not deny that the physical world has its own natural laws, how can consciousness have an impact on reality through causality? If there is, there will be a "causal over determination". because according to the natural law, there must be a physical reason for the action of "holding up the arm", but at the same time, as the dualist emphasizes the role of consciousness, there must be a spiritual reason of "wanting to hold up the arm", which Finally results in the "excess of reasons". Are there always two attributes of reasons at the same time when concerns everything related to our human beings? This is obviously logically absurd. Therefore, dualists can't explain how mental state and mental events may lead to physical events.

Based on these two, many philosophers have made some partial materialism, or partial dualism, or combined these two to make a comprehensive discussion, in order to solve the problem of understanding of consciousness, such as functionalism. But they are inevitably trapped in other problems.

The fundamental problem of the above theories is falling into a Descartes' category. Descartes divided consciousness and matter into different, incompatible features, forming a contradictory perspective. (as shown in the Table 1) [2]

This leads to the materialists desperately trying to quantify the things of consciousness into a part of natural science, such as grading human pain. Meanwhile, the dualist desperately want to prove the importance of consciousness itself, which is in sharp opposition to the physical world.

**Table 1.** Contradictory Perspectives of Consciousness and Matter

Mental	Physical
Subjective	Objective
Qualitative	Quantitative
Intentional	Nonintentional
Not spatially located & Nonextended in space	Spatially located & Spatially extended
Not explainable by physical processes	Causally explainable by microphysics
Incapable of acting causally on the physical	Acts causally and as a system is causally closed

At the same time, they all fall into a kind of reduction of ontology and causality [3]. Reduction means that when A is reduced to B, it means that A is just B. Causality is a relation between discrete events ordered in time, where the cause precedes the effect, which is often regarded as a kind of natural law. Ontology means that if the essence of A is B, then A is nothing more than B. for example, the essence of an object is the aggregation of molecules, and materialists think that the essence of consciousness is only brain movement.

## 2. Searle Naturalism's Solution to the Problem of Consciousness

So how does Searle solve the problem of consciousness by dualism and materialism? At the core, he breaks the boundary of Descartes' category and combines consciousness with material world. According to Searle, the path is "consciousness can be reduced in cause and effect, but not in ontology." [4]

Searle first dispels the false and keeps the true of materialism - the universe is made up of physical particles that exist in the force field and are often organized into systems. This theory is right; but if someone tries to prove that there is no irreducible consciousness on the ontological level, that is wrong.

The causal reduction of consciousness (i.e. produced by the nervous system) will not lead us to a kind of elimination reduction (i.e. consciousness itself disappears after being reduced to the nervous system). consciousness is indeed produced by neural activities, but this cannot be expressed as "just neural activities". The key to this link is that we need to firmly grasp the first-person characteristics of consciousness [5]. For example, the formation of "Rainbow" has certain natural laws. We can't make the rainbow appear through our own consciousness, but it also appears as a unity in our consciousness, and has the properties of "seven colors" and "curved arc". This is what physical knowledge can't bring. It's also the proof of the existence of consciousness, as the elimination reduction is based on the distinction between representation and reality.

Searle's second argument is that it is right that there is irreducible consciousness in dualism, but it is wrong to try to prove that consciousness is separated from the physical world in which we live, and consciousness is outside its physical matrix.

According to Searle, consciousness and material world are not separated, and consciousness is actually produced by neuron system. After all, we cannot find other causes for consciousness. Consciousness is indeed a part of the daily physical world, but this doesn't mean that it will be essentially reduced to neural activity [6]. Just like objects and molecules, although molecules make up objects, objects still function with their overall properties, so consciousness cannot be reduced, but it is indeed a part of the physical world. From the perspective of causality, the reality of consciousness is derived from the laws of nature as a logical inference - just as growth and reproduction are derived in the way of reality.

As a conclusion, Searle's naturalism holds that irreducible, subjective and qualitative consciousness is a part of the physical world. The causal function of consciousness is a form of

brain function which is described at a higher level than that of neurons and touch processes. Consciousness is not only the product of the material world, but also is not eliminated by ontology. Therefore, naturalism not only solves the problem of consciousness, but also the problem of exerting influence on the material world.

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