The Affective Point of View: 
Cross-Cultural Philosophical Investigations of 
Embodiment, Feeling, and Consciousness

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements 
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
Department of Philosophy 
University of Toronto

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2018

Abstract

This dissertation uses the conceptual resources of affective neuroscience and Indian Buddhist philosophy to explain the relationship between subjectivity and affect. I analyze subjective character in terms of an organism’s embodied first-personal perspective on the world. Further, I claim that the embodiment of the organism needs to be understood in terms of our ability to feel; our evolved capacity to be affected or ‘hedonically perturbed’ by our interactions with the world. An organism is hedonically perturbed or affected if it feels something as being positive or negative in response to the world’s sensory solicitations, pleasure and pain are paradigm examples. On my view, to be conscious is not just to be in contact with some object in perception, but to feel a certain way in virtue of being so related. It is tempting to think of affect exclusively in terms of short-lived episodes like strong emotions and novel sensory affects. When affect is thought of in this way, it can lead to the idea that affects in general are a kind of episodic modification of an otherwise non-affective stream of consciousness. On my view, which offers a reconstruction and interpretation of Indian Buddhist philosophy, experience is always affective in various ways. These include sensory, emotional, and homeodynamic affects that give the world value and meaning.
Acknowledgements

In giving thanks, there is a tricky question about who gets thanked first and who gets thanked last. I begin with those most important to me. I thank my wife Dorothy Robson and our little goomba SeSe Smith. Dorothy and SeSe are the foundational horizon of significance in my life around which all other things arise and pass away. Without Dorothy’s steadfast support and SeSe’s incessant goofiness, I would not be the person I am today. For that I am grateful. I would have almost certainly finished this dissertation much sooner without them. Therefore, I am even more grateful it took me as long as it did. The nucleus of trust, communication, support, respect, and love that we have built is something that I am glad that I can take for granted. Because I know from all the work we have done, that the support and love of my family is something that will always be there as long as we live.

Next, I acknowledge my committee. Christoph Emmrich has been so kind and helpful. He taught me Pāli and even though he was not part of the Philosophy Department here at the University of Toronto, he has been supportive and included me in many events at the Religious Studies Department. For that I offer him my heartfelt thanks. By being exposed to the philological rigor of Buddhist studies, I have become a humbler and hopefully more careful reader of Buddhist philosophy. My respect and admiration to those who do that important work is without limit. Therefore, I would also be remiss if I did not mention Bryan Levman. During Christoph’s sabbatical during my fourth year in the PhD program, Bryan helped me with my Pāli translations. Together we worked through an enormous amount of material from the Tipiṭaka and the translations that appear in the sixth chapter and appendix of this dissertation are the immediate result of Bryan’s close advice and feedback. I owe him an enormous debt of gratitude.

Bill Seager is my co-supervisor and the most open-minded undogmatic philosopher I have ever met. His enthusiasm for my work is incredible given that much of it is at odds with his own way of thinking. It takes a special sort of philosopher to be able to charitably and enthusiastically engage with the work of others whose orientations and foundations might be different from one’s own. Bill has done that with me with such charity and kindness. Being a rather opinionated person, I can only hope to emulate his example if I am ever in the position to advise students in the future.
I must also acknowledge my infinite debt to Evan Thompson. When I was an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, I had already taken courses on Phenomenology and Buddhism before entering Evan’s 200-level intro to philosophy of mind course. I had it in my mind that taking the conceptual resources of Yogācāra Buddhism and Husserlian phenomenology into discussions of philosophy mind would be a great idea. I was a bit sad to find out that my idea was hardly an original one. Yet, how fortunate I felt to meet Evan at that time. Evan mentored me through my remaining years in my undergraduate degree and through two failed attempts at getting into graduate school. When I was finally admitted to the PhD program at the University of Toronto, Evan left for UBC at the end of my first year. Despite the distance, he continued to supervise me through my qualifying year and my dissertation. Evan has been a supervisor, mentor, and friend to me for over 10-years. It is rare that one gets to work so closely with their heroes. For this opportunity, I am profoundly grateful.

Another epic debt of gratitude goes to Mark Kingwell. Mark has been my teaching advisor through the PhD but also a mentor and a friend. He has always treated me with respect and kindness. At times, I have felt quite solipsistic while doing my work and Mark has always been there to enjoy a meal and offer words of encouragement. His perspective has always been a valuable resource and his philosophical productivity an intimidating inspiration.

Next, I must acknowledge Zachary Irving. It was at a conference on “Mind and Attention in Indian Philosophy” at Harvard University where Zach and Evan encouraged me, better, told me straight out, that I had to work on Buddhist philosophy for my dissertation. At the time, I was toying with the idea of doing something more at the interface of philosophy of biology and philosophy of mind, but it was Zach’s insistence that changed my mind. Zach has always encouraged me to be my best intellectual self. His zest for life is both annoying, as I am quite grumpy, and inspiring. I am grateful to have such friends and colleagues in my life.

I want to now acknowledge two Professors who started me on the path of serious philosophizing. The first is Lloyd Gerson. I took Introduction to Ancient Philosophy with Professor Gerson in my second year as an undergraduate. The course blew me away. Professor Gerson’s lectures
on Plato’s *Timaeus* changed my life and convinced me to study philosophy seriously. Vincent Shen introduced me to Chinese philosophy and Phenomenology. For this I owe him much. He was the first Professor to really believe in me. My love and respect for him is enormous. His initial encouragement was instrumental in helping me to believe that I had the potential to succeed. I wouldn’t be where I am today if he hadn’t encouraged me to do the work.

John Vervaeke was the first to teach me about cognitive science and fought hard for me to get a teaching appointment in the Cognitive Science Program at the University of Toronto during my fourth year as a PhD student. He is also one of the most dedicated undergraduate teachers there are. For this support and the good example, I am thankful. Monima Chadha has been so supportive and encouraging. We spent a week talking philosophy at a Mind and Life Summer Research Institute. Her positive feedback on my ideas came at a time when I was feeling pretty doubtful about my future. It helped a lot. The next year Monima invited me to give a paper at Monash University in Australia at a conference she organized. It was a wonderful experience. Murat Aydede is the best philosopher of affect I know. His work is an inspiration and his easy going conversational style has made for a number of highly enjoyable discussions about pain. I am thankful to have him as an interlocutor.

Andrew Sepielli taught my Professional Development seminar in my fifth year. He has a way of just being himself that is quite wonderful. I admire him for his forthrightness and honesty. In my third year, I was having a terrible time. It was probably the worst period of my life. There was a strike at the University, I was losing committee members, my family life was falling apart. It showed. One day I walked into the kitchen in the department and he asked how I was doing. We didn’t know each other at the time. However, I have no filter, so I told him I was doing horribly. He asked me to pitch him on my research. His positive response to my work at that time was, psychologically speaking, a major contributor in my decision to stay in the game. I was close to quitting. I extend my thanks to him. I also thank Jennifer Nagel and Jonardon Ganeri for reading my work very carefully and providing helpful feedback and encouragement.
The graduate students in philosophy at the University of Toronto are tremendous human beings. I feel truly spoiled to have spent so many years in the company of such exceptional individuals. I thank Aaron Henry, Mason Yakety-Westfall, and Elliot Carter for being the best philosophy of minders I know. Anthony Bruno is a hero with an expansive intellect and I am fortunate to count him a friend. Mark Fortney is the kindest soul I have yet to meet and the most careful philosopher and pedagogue. Melissa Rees is hilarious and needs to eat more sandwiches. I thank Maria Keller for her openness to all the suffering, and Rachel MacKinnon and Manish Oza for being my dance crew. My thanks to Charlie Cooper-Simpson and Mike Blezy for keeping me connected to the world of Continental Philosophy when I was neck deep in neuroscience. Dave Suarez always keeps me honest with his razor-sharp intellect and his lack of any tolerance for bullshit. Emily Jane Perry is an intellectual wonder and loves Star Wars more than I do. Luke Roelofs co-taught with me the first time I was a course instructor and believes that everything is conscious. Matthew Wurst and Mike Szlachta were always checking in on me, I thank them for the empathy. Carolyn Shapiro went to work in the UK and is dearly missed. To all of these wonderful people, I am grateful. A word of acknowledgement is also due to Mary-Frances Ellison and the entire administration staff in the Philosophy Department. These people are miracle workers and they cannot be praised enough.

To my dear friend Nikki Foster, I offer thanks for support and encouragement from outside the hub of the academy. Nikki gave me the gift of being able to help her through difficult times when I was far too wrapped up in the minutiae of academic rigor and professional advancement. For keeping me sane and human, I am grateful. I am also grateful to Rory Nicol for our lunches. Getting to talk with him about the interface between philosophy and therapy has been instructive and inspiring.

My time at the Mind and Life Summer Research Institutes has been quite formative for me during the middle years of my PhD. As a serious meditator, I have often found myself to be too much the philosopher for those I practice with and too much the Buddhist for many of my philosophy friends. My time at the SRI’s has been helpful both personally and professionally in finding ways to let practice and theory blend together in (hopefully) skillful ways. I especially thank Liza Solomonova, Kieran Fox, and Mikey Lifshitz. I also thank Cliff Saron for laughing at my jokes and Gareth Thompson for his
appreciation of my egg debacle. To my meditation teachers, S.N. Goenka, Bill and Virginia Hamilton, and Bob Wagester I offer bows of respect and gratitude. The same is also due to my Wing-Chun Sifu, Kiet Pham. My thanks also to Billy Simmons and Eric Sedlacek; Dhamma friends are hard to find and very valuable.

I have done my best to do things that aren’t philosophy. Both for my own sanity, and for the well-being of my family. Therefore, thanks are due to Zach, Kelly, M, and the F2F Games crew. Spending Friday nights at the store playing Magic: The Gathering has been so wonderful. To James Davies, Nolan Witkowski, Jacob Doyle, Aaron Doyle, and Dan Sullivan I am profoundly grateful for the musical companionship. Without compatriots to make music with, I would be lost. To my former students and current colleagues, Madeleine Levac and Jesse Berlin I am thankful for the positive feedback. As a teacher, I am fortunate indeed to have had such students. To the cross-cultural philosophical crew, I am humbled to be a member of your community. Thanks especially to, Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, Matt MacKenzie, Sonam Kachru, Nic Bommarito, Christian Coseru, and Jake Davis. Thanks also to Sheridan Hough for being the nicest person on the planet.

When I was 18 years old one of my closest friends passed away. Her name was Erin Plitz. Her death was devastating. It shattered my friends and I. We never fully recovered. The memory of her life and the trauma of her death has been a constant source of motivation for me. I often wonder whether Erin would be proud of me for what I’ve done with my life. I do not know the answer to that question, but I continue to struggle with the feelings that her passing brought into the horizon of my attention. I therefore dedicate this work to her in recognition of the past’s deep capacity to direct the flow of one’s personal path, and to SeSe Smith because of the hopes they embody for what is possible in the future.
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Finally let us, particularly as knowers, not be ungrateful toward such resolute reversals of the familiar perspectives and valuations with which the spirit has raged against itself all too long now, apparently wantonly and futilely: to see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future 'objectivity' - the latter understood not as 'disinterested contemplation' (which is a non-concept and absurdity, but rather as the capacity to have ones pro and contra in one’s power, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the difference in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Treatise III; Verse 12

...trying to account for consciousness without reference to subjectivity and feeling is like trying to account for blood circulation without reference to heart contractions.

David Rudrauf and Antonio Damasio, “A Conjecture Regarding the Biological Mechanism of Subjectivity and Feeling”, p. 237
Preface

In December of 1903 William James was conducting lectures at Harvard University. It had been over ten years since the first publication of *The Principles of Psychology*. The story goes that during one of these classes he had invited a preeminent Buddhist renunciant Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), to speak to one of his classes (Guruge 1965; Kato 2016). James said to Dharmapala: “Take my chair, and I shall sit with my students. You are better equipped to lecture on psychology than I am.” Dharmapala outlined some elements of Buddhist doctrine, after which James turned to his students and remarked, “This is the psychology everybody will be studying 25 years from now.” The current interest in Buddhist philosophy and practice in the academy, and popular culture more widely, is a testament to James’s prescience on this matter, though perhaps it took a little longer than he might have originally thought. I also think James may have underestimated the scope of his own influence. His theory of emotion is very much at the heart of scientific work on affect today, he coined the term the ‘stream of consciousness’, and you cannot read a paper in the philosophy and psychology of attention that does not reference the chapter he devoted to that topic in the *Principles*. The thinking of the Buddhist philosophers and William James loom large both in the background and the foreground of what will follow.

One of the many reasons that the convergence of Jamesean philosophical psychology and Buddhist thinking is so fruitful is that it represents an attempt to solve the Nietzschean problem of the meaning crisis. When Nietzsche pronounces that ‘God is dead and we have killed him you, and I’ in the *Gay Science* (1887/1974, §125), he is not making the same kind of point that Richard Dawkins does when he compares the Christian God to a flying spaghetti monster (Dawkins 2008). Nietzsche’s point is much more profound than scientific atheism, for he would accuse the scientists, as much as the religious, of being heedless of the extent to which our cognitive capacities are co-opted by our biases and enculturated presuppositions. This is why in the third treatise of the *Genealogy of Morality* (1887/1998) Nietzsche calls for a ‘critique of truth’. Both the religious and the scientists take the value of truth to be self-evident, they simply disagree on what the truth is. But for Nietzsche we must always ask of any phenomena what are its origins and what is its value. The reason we need to ask these
questions is that we often ignore the conditioning impact of our questioning on our daily lives. We often don’t pay attention to how our thoughts make us feel, we only want to know whether or not they are true, thus suppressing a practical question about the psychological impact of our intellectual practices on our pre-reflective stream of consciousness.

When one engages seriously with William James’s thought, one finds a humane sensitivity to these existential worries animating even his most technical discussions. Buddhist philosophical soteriology has also played some role, perhaps a more culturally central one, in trying to reckon with the problem of meaning in the wake of the existential predicament enunciated by Nietzsche and others. But imbuing life with meaning and purpose in the absence of a paternalistic deity is a rather large void to be filled, or, a path to be carved.

One way of thinking about the meaning crisis is as a kind of vacancy left by the departed deity that we must now fill with something else. Perhaps material consumption or sexual distraction will suffice. Perhaps a new atheistic spirituality focused on happiness (whatever that means) and grounded in science. Perhaps we should just cultivate a razor sharp intellect and obsess ourselves with the idiosyncratic details of some obscure subfield of academic research and ignore the deeper existential question of what value our actions might have for ourselves or anyone else. I have my doubts that any of these strategies will work out. Understanding why is important.

When we conceive of the meaning crisis as a void that needs filling, we ultimately fail to fill it. A brief glance at the conflicts of the last century can attest to this. What could possibly replace the certainty afforded by sincere belief in a benevolent cosmological entity with an invested personal interest in you and the guarantee that if you do what they tell you, you will enjoy eternal rewards? I’m not sure anything can. Hence, the crisis. However, there is another way of thinking about the meaning crisis. The problem of existential meaning need not be conceived of as an absence or a deficit. Instead, we should think of the problem in terms of a surplus. The world is overfull with meaning and our task is to ignore huge swaths of it in order to carve a finite path for ourselves between the bookends of birth and death.
The path we choose in life excludes an infinity of other possibilities. With every affirmation, we neglect countless other roads. It is difficult to fathom how much we leave behind as we move down the paths we have chosen in life. We feel the cost of this choice tacitly in our bodies. Existential meaning is not just an abstract property that coheres within the metacognitive architecture of the narrative of our life, the story we tell ourselves of who we are and who we want to be. It is also something we crave and construct first-personally through our actions and feelings. Thus, within the framework of the body there is an overwhelming amount of affect that arises and passes away in response to the events of our life. It is often practical and convenient to ignore these feelings. It is often more comfortable and habitual for us to organize our experience around what we see and what we think, or maybe at dinner time, around what we taste. Yet, beneath the threshold of this interface of perception and cognition is an ocean of bodily affect that organizes, orients, and habituates our attentional capacities. It is these affectively biased attentional capacities that render the world salient to us, that organize our habits of attention, and construct a world of meaning and meaninglessness for us. Thus, to neglect our feelings is to neglect the very means by which our access the world is organized such that the world can show up for us as meaningful at all. Reckoning with these feelings is important for good philosophical work on the mind as much as it is for good practical work in choosing wisely in life.

Thus, in addition to my preoccupation with William James and the Buddhist philosophers, in what follows, I will spend a lot of time working through what contemporary affective neuroscience has to say about mental functioning. Even though these three conceptual systems have disparate aetiologies, the consilience and coherence between them is remarkable. I will be at pains to demonstrate the depth of this consilience in what follows. What all three share is a commitment to the view that the mind is at its root an affective phenomenon. Feeling is the most basic kind of mental event there is and it is responsible for entraining our most basic evolved habits of environmental coping. My task is to demonstrate that this is true and to explain the benefits that a more widespread recognition of this truth can do for our theorizing about the nature of the mind, especially consciousness.
Academic literature about the nature of consciousness has exploded over the past few decades. But the pervasive conditioning influence of affect over the contours of our stream of consciousness has not been as central to philosophical thinking about consciousness as it should be. This neglect is unfortunate but unsurprising. Our feelings are as subtle and inchoate as they are complex. Bringing them to the threshold of language is difficult, and the act of doing so transforms them. However, the result of this neglect has been a skewed perspective on how consciousness works to help organisms work their way through life. For example, when thinking about the so-called ‘hard-problem’ of consciousness, we tend to conceptualize it as something that has no functional role to play in the mental life of the organism. I think this is a mistake and I will provide arguments in favor of this diagnosis in what follows.

Consciousness is that affective frame by which the world is rendered salient to us. The process of salience construction is an evolutionarily deep one. In the pages that follow I shall try to throw some light on this process. In doing so I hope to show that philosophers should take the ubiquity of affect seriously when theorizing about the nature of consciousness. Part of what it means to be phenomenally conscious is to be affectively perturbed. We can make some real progress in understanding why there might be something like consciousness in the natural world, and why its being a phylogenetically widespread phenomenon has been advantageous to those organisms that enjoy it, if we take affect as a core feature of phenomenal character, or so I shall argue.
Introduction

This dissertation offers a scientifically informed and cross-cultural philosophical analysis of phenomenal consciousness and subjectivity. I argue that phenomenal consciousness has a subjective character that provides us with a first-personal perspective on the world. My positive contribution will be to explain our most biologically basic form of subjectivity in terms of our capacity to be affected or hedonically perturbed by our interactions with our environment.

Subjectivity is realized by organisms that are constantly bombarded by the world through sensory stimulation. Organisms respond in kind with sensorimotor, attentional, and cognitive agency. These different forms of agency arise in reaction to our being affectively perturbed by our commerce with the meaningful world in which we live. We are first and foremost creatures who feel. We are victims of the world; patients bound for a limited time in the anxiety of finite existence (Heidegger 1927/1996). Our active engagement therewith is a kind of reaction or response in virtue of which we construct, create, and project meaning with the foreknowledge of our own inevitable annihilation.

We get our first sense of that inevitability through the various perturbations that animate our lived body. My hypothesis is that it is here that our most phylogenetically and ontogenetically basic sense of subjectivity arises (Craig 2010; Damasio 1999; Denton 2006, 2009). If this is right, then it will turn out that affect is a ubiquitous feature of almost all of our experiences. Not only ubiquitous but also deep. By 'deep' I mean that the roots of our capacity for being affected by the world ramify down to our most basic biological functions (Damasio and Carvalho 2013). One consequence of this depth is that our phenomenal lives, what we experience or live through, goes well beyond what we perceive and think. Our experience of being an embodied subject and of having a world of meaning in view is, in its most primordial form, realized by a kind of affectivity (Ratcliffe 2008). Affective subjectivity provides organisms with a basic sense of being embodied subjects in a world that matters.

In developing my positive view, I will offer a corrective against a few different trends in the philosophical literature on subjectivity. The first trend is one of neglect. I argue that phenomenal consciousness has a subjective character that provides the organism with a first-personal perspective
on the world, where that perspective is specified in terms of the organism’s embodiment. Consciousness cannot be explained just in terms of the content of mental states but also about our sense of being a subject who has experiences.

The second trend is to characterize subjectivity in ambiguous and undeveloped ways. For example, Ned Block’s (1995; 2007) account of consciousness refers to subjectivity as a kind of ‘me-ishness’ and then moves on without really developing this idea. Subjectivity is not just a feature of a token mental state. Subjectivity is that in virtue of which we have a sense of self. Explaining this phenomenon will have to go beyond simply indexing some inchoate sense of 'me-ishness' to a token perceptual state. Further, philosophers who think about subjectivity tend to characterize it as a kind of observer that is aware of its own mental states as they arise. This view is problematic for two reasons. First, it seems to violate transparency, the idea that experiences can only be grasped in terms of what they are about. When I try to introspect my own experiences, all I can grasp is their content, not the experiences themselves. Second, this view characterizes subjectivity in a detached spectator-like way that does not seem true to phenomenology nor to the empirical facts of our biology, which are anything but value neutral or uninvolved in the world in which we are embedded. To correct for this, subjectivity has been characterized in agent-centered ways either at the level of cognition, perception (Thompson 2007; O’Regan and Noë 2001) or attention (Watzl 2011; Eilan 2006, 2010). Agency-centered views hold much promise but are importantly incomplete. They do not treat of affect as systematically as is required. This dissertation fills that lacuna.

The dissertation has two parts of four chapters each. The individual chapters function as arguments for premises of a master argument. The master argument is the following:

**Master Argument:**

I. Subjectivity or subjective character is constitutive of phenomenal character. [Ch. 1]

II. The embodied perspective of the organism is constitutive of subjective character. [Ch. 1 and 2]

III. Affect is constitutive of an organism’s embodied perspective. [Ch. 3]
C1. Affect is constitutive of phenomenal character.

IV. Affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action. [Chs. 5-8]

C2. Phenomenal character is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

Part I offers a systematic argument in favor of what I call ‘The Affectively Embodied Perspectival View of Subjective Character’. In the opening chapter I argue for the first premise of the master argument by reconstructing a neglected argument from Thomas Nagel (1974) that shows that the subjective character of experience is intimately tied to the embodied perspective of the organism having it. Many philosophers interested in consciousness who responded to Nagel have tended to focus only on the qualitative character of experience (Chalmers 1996; Kim 2007). Thus, in the first chapter I argue that we need to spend more time focusing on the subjective character of experience. The second chapter offers a survey of various views from philosophers who do pay attention to subjective character. I argue that most views on offer neglect the embodied perspective of the organism and therefore are incomplete or go in the wrong direction. The second chapter thus functions as an argument in favor of the second premise of the master argument. In the third chapter I offer a series of arguments in favor of premise III of the master argument. A proper analysis of the embodied perspective of the organism — and thus, an account of the subjective character of experience — must take account of the way in which the living body is affective. This leads to the establishing of the first conclusion of the master argument, that affect is constitutive of phenomenal character. All phenomenally conscious experience is affective in some way. I spend some time in the third chapter explaining what some of these ways amount to.

A note on my use of the language of ‘constitution’ is in order. When I claim that affect is constitutive of phenomenal character I am claiming that *what it is* to be phenomenally conscious is to be affected in some way. It is not just that affect is a necessary condition for phenomenal consciousness. That might imply that the two things are separate but are still closely related. I wish to argue for something more intimate in analyzing the concepts of ‘affect’ and ‘phenomenal
consciousness’. My view is that all phenomenal consciousness is affective to some degree. The content of all phenomenally conscious experiences is affective in various ways and to varying degrees.

There are two explanatory upshots or applications that this view offers us. The first is that it gives us novel resources for thinking about the so-called ‘phenomenal overflow’ controversy. The phenomenal overflow thesis is the view that we live through experiences, the contents of which we do not access with our capacities for working memory, attention, and modes of expression or output such as intentional action, speech, and inference (Block 1995). In the final chapter of the first part of the dissertation, I argue that current approaches to the phenomenal overflow thesis that focus on visual consciousness are at a standstill and that by thinking more seriously about affect and some special pathological cases, we can make a stronger case for the phenomenal overflow thesis.

In the second part of the thesis I explore the contributions of William James and the Buddhist philosophers to the picture of affective subjectivity that I develop in the first part. The reason this expansion is necessary is that both James and the Buddhists have novel conceptual resources that can enrich our understanding of the connection between affect and habitual action. By developing this connection in sufficient detail, I use the second half of the dissertation to provide an extended argument for the second explanatory upshot of the positive view I put forward in the first part. Namely, that by thinking of consciousness in terms of affective subjectivity, we can provide an account of the epistemic role of consciousness. That is, we can provide a positive view about what consciousness does for the organisms that have it.

In the fifth chapter I set up this problem in terms of a critique of contemporary accounts of the epistemic role of consciousness that focus too much on how the contents of phenomenally conscious mental states furnish us with defeasible justificatory warrant for demonstrative thoughts (Campbell 2002; 2004; Smithies 2011). Here I argue that a Neo-Jamesean view that is more focused on bodily affect can help substantiate an account of the epistemic role of consciousness that does not depend on the interface between perception and cognition and the propositional knowledge such an interface affords. Rather, I aim to provide an explanation of the epistemic role of consciousness that is focused
on practical know-how and the way in which bodily affect conditions the interfacing of perception and action.

The sixth chapter is a careful reconstruction of the Indian Buddhist debates about the nature of affective bias. This reconstruction is helpful because it provides a detailed account of how the mind is affectively layered. Such an account is important because affect is not just something that arises in response to something currently happening in the world. Affect exercises a pervasive conditioning influence on the organism’s mental functions and bodily agency. The Buddhist position that I will reconstruct in this chapter sheds light on how these two modes of affective conditioning interact to habituate the organism in all kinds of paradigmatic ways. Once we take on the idea that bodily affect exercises a constant conditioning influence on the organism’s mental life, the questions of temporal continuity and conditioning influence between deep affective bias and basic consciousness arise. Therefore, in chapter 7 I critique and reconstruct an Indian Buddhist view of mental continuity and sentient consciousness.

In the final chapter, I complete my argument for the fourth premise of the master argument and show how the view I have been developing can help us make progress on the hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers 1996). I do not claim to have solved the problem, but I will show that consciousness is less mysterious than it seems when its affective dimensions are foregrounded in our theorizing. The benefit of this view is that it provides phenomenal consciousness with an explanatory role in a theory about how the mind works. It does so in a non-anthropocentric way by focusing on the interface between perception and action and how this interface is lubricated by our capacity for bodily affect.

A note on my citations of Buddhist texts is in order. I cite amply from the Tipitaka, the set of canonical texts of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition of India and South Asia. The canon is written in Pāli, an ancient Prakrit language very close to classical Sanskrit. The Suttas are discourses of the Buddha. They purport to represent the actual words of the historical Buddha. In citing these texts, all technical terms like dukkha are italicized. When using descriptive names of schools and strata of texts
like Yogācāra or Abhidhamma-piṭaka I maintain the use of diacritics but do not italicize. When mentioning texts like *Kathāvatthu* I use italics. When citing texts from the Tipiṭaka, I use the following (MN I 299). MN refers to the Majjhima Nikāya of the Sutta piṭaka of the Tipiṭaka. These abbreviations can be found in the bibliography alongside the English translations of these texts. The Roman numeral refers to the volume number of the Pāli Translation Society edition of the Tipiṭaka followed by the page numbers of that edition. For commentaries that have not been translated I rely on the Digital Pāli Reader, a piece of software that has multiple versions of the Tipiṭaka fully digitized.

I note also at the outset that my engagement with Buddhist philosophy is almost entirely confined to the Pāli canon or Tipiṭaka of Theravāda Buddhism. My reasons for this are twofold. First, there are limits to what one can do in a single dissertation. The philosophical world of Buddhism ranges over many languages and cultures. Getting a grip on even one of these traditions arguably requires a lifetime of study. Thus, in trying to produce a piece of philosophy that is current with contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, cognitive science, neuroscience, and to a lesser extent, Phenomenology, my resources are limited in engaging with the full breadth and depth of Buddhist philosophy, even when limited to its developments in India and South Asia, let alone in Tibet, China, Korea, etc. The second reason is one of philosophical interest. Much contemporary scholarship on Buddhist philosophy is focused on Mahāyana Buddhism. I am convinced that the Sutta-piṭaka of the Tipiṭaka is a deep reservoir of philosophical insight. Thus, in confining my philosophical reflections to that strata of texts and the commentarial literature based on it, I hope to illuminate some of what they have to offer to contemporary philosophical and scientific discourse on the nature of the mind.
PART I: Affectively Embodied Subjectivity
1
Content and Perspective:
Two Aspects of Phenomenal Consciousness

There is only perspectival seeing, only a perspectival ‘knowing’; and the more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will be our ‘concept of this matter, our ‘objectivity’ be.

Friedrich Nietzsche from On the Genealogy of Morality, Treatise III, Sect. 12

Introduction

Many philosophers think that we face two kinds of problems in attempting to explain consciousness (Chalmers 1996; Eilan 2000). The ‘easy problems’ concern the explanation of ‘cognitive access’ or ‘access consciousness,’ that is, explaining how information is integrated and made available for the system to use in intentional action, inference, and speech (Block 1995). The hard problem concerns conscious experience or phenomenal consciousness (Chalmers 1996). Phenomenal consciousness is often defined in terms of Thomas Nagel’s expression that there is ‘something it is like’ for an organism to have it (Nagel 1974).1 A creature is phenomenally conscious if and only if there is something it is like to be that creature. A mental state is phenomenally conscious if and only if there is something it is like for a creature to be in that state. The hard problem of consciousness is that there seems to be no readily available physical or functional explanation of why or how there is something it is like to be a phenomenally conscious creature with phenomenally conscious mental states (Chalmers 1996).

In this chapter I distinguish between two important aspects of phenomenal consciousness. Following Uriah Kriegel (2009), I call the first aspect ‘qualitative character’ or ‘content’ and the second aspect ‘subjective character’ or ‘perspective’.2 Both aspects make up what I will call the ‘phenomenal

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1 It is widely accepted that there is a conceptual distinction between phenomenal consciousness and cognitive access. However, it is not widely agreed that this conceptual distinction amounts to a metaphysical difference in kinds of consciousness. For example, Jesse Prinz (2011) holds that phenomenal consciousness can be reductively explained in terms of the contents of perceptual representations being made cognitively accessible via attention. Daniel Dennett (1991), however, argues that the distinction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness is only a notional one and that the concept of phenomenal consciousness can be exhaustively analyzed away in terms of cognitive access.

2 The term ‘subjective character’ originally comes from Thomas Nagel (1974), but my usage follows Kriegel’s (2009), which is slightly different from Nagel’s.
character’ of conscious experience. The phenomenal character experienced by an organism comprises both that creature’s experience of the world as having a qualitative character, or the world’s seeming to it to be a certain way, and its experience of the world from its subjective point of view (Nagel 1974). Philosophical investigations of consciousness have tended to neglect subjectivity by focusing on the qualitative aspects of sensory experience (often called qualia). Therefore, in this first chapter, I argue that philosophical discussions of consciousness need to pay more attention to subjectivity. In terms of the master argument I laid out in the introduction, the purpose of this chapter will be to argue for the first and second premises of the master argument, namely, that (I) subjectivity or subjective character is constitutive of phenomenal character and (II) that the organism’s embodied perspective on its environment is constitutive of subjective character.

To begin, in §1.1 I set up a conceptual topography for thinking about consciousness that will serve as a foundation for this chapter and those that follow. I show that Nagel’s conception of phenomenal consciousness can be thought of as a basis for both approaches that I will explore in this chapter, namely, approaches that focus on the subjective character and those that focus on qualitative character. In §1.2 I offer a reconstruction of Nagel’s views about subjective character, focusing on the role that the embodiment of the organism plays in constituting the subjective character of its experience. I call this view the ‘embodied perspectival’ view of subjective character (EP). In §1.3 I consider some important critical remarks that challenge the embodied perspectival view of subjective character. Following my reply to these initial criticisms of the embodied perspectival view, I argue that if my interpretation of Nagel is correct, then views of consciousness that focus only on qualitative character fail (§1.4).

1.1 Nagel on ‘What It’s Like’ and the Subjective Character of Consciousness

Nagel’s approach to consciousness serves as a basis both for views of consciousness that focus on qualitative character and those that focus on subjective character. The main claim that defines Nagel’s approach is that an organism is conscious if and only if there is something it is like to be that organism (Nagel 1974, 436). Nagel's main example is that of a bat using its capacities for sonar navigation to perceive its environment. There is something it is like to be a bat navigating its environment. Similarly,
a human being is a conscious subject because there is something it is like to be a human getting along in the world with its own capacities for perception. For Nagel, to say that an experience has a subjective character means both that it has a qualitative character and that the experience is had from a unified first-person perspective. Both the notion of qualitative character and the notion of subjectivity or the first-person perspective are built into Nagel’s concept of subjective character. The world seems to be a certain way to a subject that has a first-personal perspective on it.

I use 'subjective character' in a more precise and restricted sense than Nagel does. We need to distinguish between two aspects of phenomenal character: its qualitative character and its subjective character. The qualitative character of a phenomenally conscious experience is that aspect, quality, or property of an experience in virtue of which there is something concrete and particular that it is like to have that experience. In Nagel’s terminology, the qualitative character of an experience is the whatness of the what-it’s-like-ness of the experience (Levine 2004, 7). One way of thinking about this aspect of phenomenal character is in terms of the various ways the world appears in the content of perceptual experience. When we see a ripe tomato, it has a certain reddish quality to it; when you smell freshly baked apple pie, it smells of cinnamon and sweet cooked apples. Particular events occurring in and on the body are also experienced as having a qualitative character; the tense pain in my left baby toe has an aching quality to it. These examples all point to a kind of contentful aspect of experience that purports to tell us something about how the world is in virtue of our having the experience.

Subjective character is that aspect of a phenomenally conscious experience in virtue of which the world appears to and from a first-personal point of view. We have a specific and limited kind of

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3 By ‘unity’ here, I mean that a first-person perspective is temporally unified, i.e. it stays relatively invariant across time, though not necessarily completely unchanging, and that it has this unity partially in virtue of its sensory apparatus providing the subject with a modally-integrated perceptual point of view on the environment it is inhabiting.

4 In framing the problem in this way, it is not my intention to beg the question against those who endorse the transparency thesis, that is, the view that all there is to experience is the content of a representation.

5 In chapter 3, I will offer reasons for thinking that feelings in the body play a constitutive role in the subjective character of phenomenal consciousness.
access to the world when we experience it because of the configuration and processing limits of our sensory receptors. Because our experience is perspectival, the world shows up for us in a certain way. When philosophers talk about subjectivity or subjective character, it is this fact of the world showing up in a distinctive first-personal way for us that they are trying to explain. I will refer to the subjective, first-person, perspectival aspect of phenomenal character as 'subjective character' (Kriegel 2009). Together the qualitative and subjective characters constitute the phenomenal character of any given experience. Thus, Nagel's term 'subjective character' is equivalent to my term 'phenomenal character'. Henceforth, unlike Nagel, I use ‘subjective character’ to refer only to the perspectival component of phenomenal character in contrast to the qualitative aspect.

Views that focus more on qualitative character than on subjective character in their analyses of consciousness can confidently trace their ancestry to Nagel’s view for two reasons. First, according to Nagel, part of what makes it the case that there is something it is like to be a bat is that there is a unique qualitative character to the bat's perception. When the bat perceives the world through echolocation, the world shows up in a particular way to the bat (1974, 438). Second, Nagel also argues for the logical and conceptual possibility of conscious states being absent despite the presence of their proposed physical and functional correlates (436–7). This ‘absent qualia’ scenario lies at the heart of much discussion of the so-called ‘hard problem’ of consciousness (Chalmers 1996), a discussion that is focused on qualitative character at the expense of subjective character.

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6 Some philosophers call this feature ‘me-ishness’ (Block 1995, 2007), ‘for-me-ness’ (Kriegel 2009; Zahavi and Kriegel 2015) or ‘mineness’ (Zahavi 2005). Although later (in chapter 2), we will see that these terms are not exactly equivalent (Guillot 2016), they all nevertheless aim to capture the idea that the qualitative character of our experience is present to us in a distinctive first-personal way.

7 An immediate worry arises. Might it be sufficient to talk of perspective only in terms of the limits of information processing imposed by the geometrical structure of a system’s embodiment? If that is right, then a television camera would count as having a perspective. But I want to assume that there is nothing it is like to be a television camera. To this worry, I would reply that a television camera does not have a perspective, it has informational processing limits. A perspective amounts to something more. A perspective is something one has in virtue of experiencing the world as seeming to be a certain way to one. The world does not seem to be one way or the other to a television camera. I deal with this question in more detail in §1.4 and from a slightly different angle, in chapter 3.
As I will argue at length in the chapters that follow, the neglect of subjective character is problematic. The bat’s capacity to perceive the world requires not only particular instances of perception via echolocation but also a unified perspective from which the bat can perceive anything at all (Nagel 1974, 437). This is why Nagel talks about organisms as a whole, and not just their mental states, when he talks about the connection between consciousness and there being something it’s like to be a conscious subject. All conscious experiences are constituted by the point of view of the organism having them.

1.2 A Perspectival View of Subjective Character

Here I articulate a reading of Nagel’s (1974) position that focuses on subjective character and the embodied perspective of the organism. Call this the embodied perspectival view of subjective character:

**EP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious states is at least partially constituted\(^8\) by the organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

Below is a reconstruction of some of the central claims of Nagel’s argument that tie his analysis of consciousness to subjectivity (HB=Humans versus Bats):

**HB1.** Humans and bats have different kinds of perceptual systems.

This difference in organization determines the differences in the types of experiences we have. Our primary sense is vision, for bats, it is echolocation. Because of this difference in primary sense, there are profound differences in how the world shows up for each of us. The bat’s perspective is different from our human perspective because its perceptual system is different from ours.

**HB2.** The nature and function of a perceptual system constitutes an organism’s point of view on the world.

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\(^8\) I hedge here in order to make room for the view that the subjective character of experience might be constituted by a plurality of factors, perhaps those pertaining to our capacities for cognition. My aim is to develop a minimal view, one that applies to a wide variety of organisms.
The idiosyncratic configuration of the bat’s sensory apparatus constitutes a particular perspective on the world, one that makes it the case that there is something it is like to be a bat. What it’s like to be a bat depends on its unique sensory system. Because the sensory system has evolved to process information about the environment in a certain way, the organism experiences the environment as seeming a certain way to it. Similarly, what it’s like to be a human being depends on our unique sensory systems.

We can now derive the following conclusion:

**HB-C1.** Humans and bats have different points of view on the world.

This conclusion follows from the constitutive connection between types of perceptual systems (HB1) and first-person perspectives (HB2).

**HB3.** If two species of organisms have points of view on the world, then any token perceptual states enjoyed by those organisms, however similar their contents, will differ in their phenomenal characters.

This difference is derived from the ways in which different species’s perceptual systems are organized. In Nagel’s words, “...an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something it is like to be that organism” (436). His motivation for using the bat example is to compare a foreign mode of perception to our own in order to draw out the connection between phenomenal character and a point of view (437-8). Our concrete individual experience is at least partially constituted by the fact that we

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9 There is a small puzzle here about the extent to which Nagel is concerned with types of perspectives or just token perspectives. Christoph Hoerl (2015, 191) points out that at times Nagel frames the problem in terms of a connection between ‘phenomenological features’ of experience and an individual point of view. Indeed, the reason physicalism seems impossible is because, “...every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view...” (Nagel 1974, 427). By contrast, in other places in the paper he is clearly talking about types of points of view, for example in his contrastive analysis of bat and human perception. I think this problem is easily resolved. It is differences at the level of types that mark the distinction between the first-person and third-person perspectives. However, types of experiences are embodied in particular organisms. Types of things are types precisely because there are tokens of those very types in the world. It is the fact that there are concrete individual experiences had by individual organisms that modulate any and all conscious access to the world that make an exhaustively third-personal analysis of those very perspectives impossible. However, the fact that an organism is a member of a species, and thus enjoys a type of perspective in virtue of that membership, accounts for the particular way that any given organism enjoys its own first-personal perspective.
are an organism of a particular sort. Membership in a species entails that we experience the world through a particular perceptual apparatus. The world shows up for us in perception in the particular way that it does because of the nature and function of our perceptual apparatus. The world would not appear the way it does if we were an organism of a different sort, with a differently evolved perceptual apparatus.

**HB-C2.** Any token perceptual states enjoyed by organisms of different species, however similar in their contents, will differ in their phenomenal character.

Another way of putting this point is to say that having a point of view or first-personal perspective makes a phenomenal difference to the experiences had by an organism, regardless of what the contents of any token experience might be. It is in virtue of having a perceptual system of a certain sort that an individual organism enjoys a particular, concrete perspective on the world, a perspective that there is something it is like to enjoy (Hoerl 2015). Thus, Nagel thinks that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience includes there being a subjective character (in my sense) that makes it the case that there is something it is like to be a creature of a certain sort (Nagel 1974, 436).

Nagel thinks that this view of consciousness entails that we cannot understand the truth of physicalism. His argument for this consequence of his conception of consciousness is the following (IP=The Incomprehensibility of Physicalism):

**IP1.** The phenomenal character of conscious experience has a subjective character, i.e., a character understandable only from a first-personal point of view.

I explained this claim above in my treatment of Nagel’s previous argument.

**IP2.** If consciousness is to be given a physical explanation, then there must be some physical, third-personal account of the subjective character of experience.

The plausibility of (IP2) should be self-explanatory. What it is to explain something third-personally is for it to have a physical or functional analysis.
**IP3.** We can only understand the subjective character of experience from a first-personal point of view (which we cannot do in the bat case because of the massive differences in the nature and function of our perceptual systems).

The truth of (IP3) amounts to a denial of the consequent of (IP2). Therefore:

**IP-C1.** Conscious experience cannot be given a physical explanation.

We can immediately formulate the following conditional in response to this first conclusion:

**IP4.** If conscious experience cannot be given a physical explanation, then physicalism is incomprehensible.

The conclusion obviously follows:

**IP-C2.** Physicalism is incomprehensible.

A physical explanation of consciousness cannot be tied to any particular point of view on the world. Thus, such an explanation would by nature have to abandon the first-personal point of view in order to provide a third-personal analysis of consciousness. But since consciousness is essentially first-personal, such an explanation is, if not impossible, not comprehensible by us, precisely because our capacity to know things about consciousness is constituted by the fact that we live through this consciousness first-personally.

There are many philosophers who disagree with this line of argument (see Churchland 1985 for an important critical analysis of Nagel’s arguments). At this juncture, however, my purpose is not to get embroiled in a metaphysical debate about whether or not phenomenal consciousness is physically explicable.\(^\text{10}\) I have outlined Nagel’s argument that physicalism is incomprehensible in order to demonstrate that its success depends upon a conception of consciousness that gives the subjective

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\(^{10}\) I will have something to say about this in chapter 8.
perspective of the organism a central place. Thus, even though much of the philosophy of consciousness that came after Nagel has been focused more on qualitative character, Nagel’s approach gives subjective character a central place for both phenomenological and metaphysical reasons. According to Nagel, subjectivity is central to understanding what it is like to be a conscious organism. Further, because of the centrality of subjectivity to consciousness, physicalistic explanations are incomprehensible to us.

Whatever take you might have on the metaphysical and epistemic upshot of these considerations as they pertain to the so-called ‘mind-body problem’, what emerges from my reading of Nagel’s view is an account of subjective character that is worth taking seriously. Call it the embodied perspectival view of subjective character:

**EP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious states is at least partially constituted by the organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

In the chapters that follow, I will develop this view into something more substantial. However, before I can do so, I need to address an important objection.

1.3 **Do Bats Have Points of View?**

Kathleen Akins (1993) argues that bats do not have points of view and that any phenomenology they might have has nothing to do with their non-existent perspectives. If she’s right, then my view is wrong, because I have argued that the embodied perspective of the organism is at least partially constitutive of the subjective character of its phenomenally conscious experience. I interpret Akins’s criticisms as an argument against premise (HB2) of my above reconstruction of Nagel’s position. Recall that premise states that:

**HB2.** The nature and function of a perceptual system constitutes an organism’s point of view on the world.

By engaging in a careful analysis of the bat’s behavior profile and neurophysiological organization, Akins thinks she has a way of using the objective point of view to tell us something important about
the bat’s subjective point of view, namely, that it doesn’t have one. If the bat does not have a point of view, then any experience it might have cannot be constituted by a point of view.

Why might one think that the bat has no point of view? Akins’s position rests on the following claims. First, the bat is capable of little or no cortical integration of sensory information. According to Akins, the cortex of the bat, “…encodes only highly filtered information about specific properties of the prey: its relative velocity, size, range, location and ‘edibility’” (Akins 1993, 149). Because of this, it is reasonable to think that unlike a human brain, for example, the bat’s brain lacks the capacity to encode ‘complex spatial representations’ that represent objects as stable mind-independent particulars in a world separate from the bat. That is, the bat’s nervous system is not designed to represent the world as a stable container of particulars: “[T]here is little reason to suppose that the bat’s sonar system is designed for the large-scale integration of information over time.” (ibid. 150). For Akins, if there is no cortical integration sufficient to encode perceptual representations of object permanence, then it makes no sense to ascribe to the bat a phenomenal point of view. If the bat has no point of view, then if it does have experience, that experience cannot be constituted by something which it lacks.

There are a few replies to this line of argument. One might accept this analysis and deny that bats have experience but still preserve the connection between experience and a point of view. I don’t want to take that road. Instead, my response will be twofold. The first is a relatively surface-level response about the dialectical position the bat example plays in Nagel’s argument. The second is that I will deny the presupposition of Akins’s argument, namely, that if the bat’s cortical functions are insufficient to encode perceptual representations of a stable mind-independent world, then we should avoid ascribing a phenomenal point of view to the organism.

The purpose of Nagel’s discussion of the bat is not analyze the particular case of the bat, it is to provide us with a contrast class for thinking about our own experience. It serves the same function that medieval and early modern philosophers had in mind in comparing our minds to those of God and angels. Even if the bat’s experiences are radically different from our own, this does no damage to Nagel’s overall purpose of emphasizing that our experience of the world is tied to a point of view, even
if it turns out that other organisms have a point of view that is very different from our own. Thus, even if it turns out the bat doesn’t work as a relevant contrast class because it lacks either experience or a point of view, this doesn’t undermine Nagel’s point.

More importantly, however, I see no reason to endorse the claim that the bat’s incapacity to represent the world as being a stable set of mind-independent objects means that the bat does not have a point of view on the world. As Akins points out, because the bat’s primary perceptual response to the world is auditory rather than visual, the information it receives is highly dependent on the signals it sends out (ibid. 131-2). Moreover, the space of sound does not provide an ambient surround for perception the same way that light does. The boundaries of the space of sound are constantly shifting and re-organizing themselves depending on what is heard and what is said, where ‘said’ refers to the bat’s ability to send out signals into its environment. It makes more sense to think of the bat’s perception as a field of availability, or an affordance landscape (Walsh 2011). What is perceived is not mind-independent spatiotemporal objects but opportunities for satisfying the organism’s needs (Gibson 1986; Chemero 2003). Phenomenologically speaking, there is reason to think that this kind of dynamic affordance-based model of perception is not only operating in nonhuman animals but also in humans as well (cf. Heidegger 1926/1996; Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012). When one takes this kind of view on board, the tight connection between a cortically integrated object representation is no longer necessary for an organism to be counted as having a phenomenal point of view.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, I do not find this objection convincing. It is perfectly consistent to maintain that the boundaries of the bat’s world are ambiguous and shifting in accordance with the bat’s probing of the environment and that the bat has a point of view.

\textbf{1.4 \hspace{1em} Content-based Approaches to Consciousness}

In this section, I consider approaches to consciousness that I call ‘content views’ or approaches that focus exclusively on qualitative character. Given my commitment to the centrality of subjective

\textsuperscript{11} I have not provided any argument for why one ought to take this view on board, but I will do so in direct and indirect ways in chapter 3.
character to an account of phenomenal consciousness, it is necessary for me to argue that all approaches that neglect it are inadequate. Such will be my task in the present section.

In referring to the views of consciousness that follow as ‘content views’, I am using the term ‘content’ in a specific way that requires some explanation. My notion of content has a certain degree of generality in its reference. I will specify the nature of this generality in three ways.

First, my usage of the notion of ‘content’ in the context of thinking about phenomenal consciousness is intended to cut across different metaphysical conceptions of how perception works. A representationalist can think of content in terms of the properties of mental states, a direct realist can think of content in terms of actual objects and their properties in the world (Siegel 2010). Thus, in referring to the content of phenomenally conscious experiences, I make no commitment to a metaphysical theory of perception.

Secondly, my discussion of content here is meant to include conceptions of consciousness that may or may not hold that consciousness essentially involves intentionality. By intentionality I mean that some mental states are directed to things outside of themselves. An example is my olfactory experience of freshly baked apple pie. This experience is intentional because in virtue of my having it I am perceptually acquainted with a subsection of the world that seems a certain way to me. If there is an apple pie on the table over there, then my experience is veridical. If there is no apple pie, then my experience is not veridical. However, in virtue of having such an experience, the world seems a certain way to me, olfactorily speaking. Insofar as my experience of the world puts me in a position to be right or wrong about what the world is like, that experience is intentional (Siewert 1997). It is about the world and it has veridicality conditions that might or might not be satisfied by the world actually (or not) being the way my experience tells me it seems.

By contrast, other phenomenally conscious experiences have been thought to be non-intentional because such experiences seem to make no claim about the world being configured in one way or the other. Ned Block's (2003) favorite example is an orgasm. One might take issue with this example and argue that an orgasm represents the body as being a certain way. A better example might
be affective states such as moods (Searle 2000), which do not seem to be directed toward an object. One could argue, however, following Heidegger (1927/1966), that although moods are not object-directed, they are intentional, because they present the world as being a certain way. The question here boils down to whether or not a mental state’s being intentional requires that mental state to represent the properties of an object. If yes, then moods are not intentional. If, on the other hand, it is possible for the world as a whole to seem a certain way to one — as if everything was dreary, perhaps — then moods are intentional. Insofar as moods and other non-object directed experiences are construed as non-intentional, some philosophers have thought that they do not purport to represent the world outside of the subject as being one way or the other. My notion of content is meant to apply to both intentional and non-intentional experiences. On my view, an experience can have content even if it doesn’t tell you anything about what the world is like. A good example of that would be the way Ryle (2000) and Smart (1959) use the notion of ‘sensation’ to talk about consciousness. A sensation is an internal raw feel that doesn’t tell you anything about what the world is like. But it still counts as content for me because it is something I am able to be phenomenally aware of.

Third, ‘content’ also refers to anything one can be aware of. ‘Aware of’ here refers to a basic dyadic structure of subject and object that tends to obtain in many conscious states, excluding, for the moment, atypical states where the subject/object duality might not be present (e.g. Lutz et al. 2007). Thus, I use ‘aware of’ in a way that excludes subconscious or unconscious information processing or otherwise, non-phenomenal notions of awareness (Chalmers 1996). On one side, there is a meaningful world, a limited portion of which, is disclosed in a conscious experience. On the other, there is the phenomenal awareness for, in, or to which some subsection of the world is disclosed or represented. Content views analyze consciousness in terms of the first part of this dyad by focusing on what is disclosed in a conscious experience. By focusing exclusively on what is disclosed, such views neglect that aspect of experience which becomes acquainted with or phenomenally aware of that which is

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12 A point to which I will return in §1.4.1.1
disclosed. Only views that take subjective character seriously are in a position to explain this latter feature of consciousness.

Another way of putting this point is as follows. By focusing exclusively on qualitative character in discussing consciousness, consciousness is analyzed only in terms of what it is about, where ‘aboutness’ here refers to any phenomenal event or content that is disclosed to a subject of experience, regardless of whether that event or content tells the subject anything about how the world is configured. While we might endorse the view that intentionality is essential to any analysis of consciousness, this is not the same as claiming that we can understand the nature of consciousness by talking only about what we are conscious of (Husserl 1913/2008). Philosophers who endorse the content view use different terms to describe what we are aware of, but ultimately such views amount to the claim that we can exhaustively analyse consciousness in terms of that which is beheld, apprehended, or known in experience rather than that which beholds, apprehends, or knows in experience. This seems like a category mistake, or at best, an incomplete sort of analysis.

In what follows I distinguish two different approaches to the content view of consciousness, one non-representational, one representational. I argue that while the representational version of the content view is better equipped to deal with certain difficulties facing the non-representational view — namely, the problem of phenomenal intentionality — both suffer from the problem of being unable to do justice to the phenomenology of subjective character.

1.4.1 Non-Representational Versions of the Content View

Here I distinguish between three different approaches to non-representational versions of the content view and explain why none are sufficient to adequately explain the phenomenal character of experience.

1.4.1.1 Sensations
Philosophers like Gilbert Ryle (2000) and J.C.C. Smart (1959) have used the term ‘sensations’ to talk of phenomenal events. This notion refers to the idea that consciousness is composed of private mental events that have an ineffable ‘raw feel’. The main difficulty with this approach is that it does not allow
for an explanation of how being conscious puts us in touch with a world. Consider Smart’s response to some important objections to his own version of identity theory (whereby phenomenal consciousness is type-identical with some relevant type of neural goings-on). Smart thinks that, "It might seem that this property [of being a yellow flash] lies inevitably outside the physicalist framework within which I am trying to work (either by 'yellow' being an objective emergent property of physical objects, or else by being a power to produce yellow sense-data, where 'yellow'...refers to a purely phenomenal or introspectible quality” (Smart, 1959; 148). The logical space wherein consciousness is situated on this view is divided quite cleanly between consciousness being either an introspectible sense-datum or an emergent property of a physical object. Consciousness is either something entirely within the subject to the exclusion of the world or something entirely in the world of objects.

This view is also espoused by Gilbert Ryle whose quasi-behavioristic account of mind is partially inspired by an identification of sensations with the content of the stream of consciousness and an exiling of the latter from mental discourse. According to Charles Siewert, “Ryle helped implant a lasting tendency to quarantine consciousness (in the ‘stream sense) off in some theoretical ghetto of ‘sensations’ or ‘feels’, where it could be segregated from intelligence and understanding...” (Siewert 2013, 201). The passage that Siewert is referring to is the following:

Whatever series of sensations an intelligent person may have, it is always conceivable that a merely sentient creature might have had a precisely similar series; and if by ‘stream of consciousness’ were meant a ‘series of sensations’, then from a mere inventory of the contents of such a stream there would be no possibility of deciding whether the creature that had these sensations was an animal or a human being; an idiot, a lunatic or a sane [person]; much less whether [they were] an ambitious argumentative philologist or a slow-witted but industrious magistrates’ clerk.

(Ryle 1949/2002, 204-5)\(^3\)

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\(^3\) It is wrong to think that there being a layer of consciousness that is common to human beings as well as 'merely sentient' forms of life entails that such sensations do not contribute to our intelligent commerce in the world. This is a point I will return to in the chapters that follow.
Once you take on the conception of consciousness as a raw-feel or private sensation, your options narrow considerably when trying to provide a philosophical analysis of its significance. This is why philosophers like Smart work so hard to argue for type-identity between sensations and brain states and why philosophers like Ryle try to excise discussion of sensations completely from mental discourse. Both strategies eliminate the need to say anything about what consciousness does for the organism that has it.

However, there are reasons to think that we should conceive of consciousness as doing things for the organism, in particular, putting it in touch with its environment in a way that facilitates knowledge that the organism would not be able to acquire in the absence of such experience. Consider, for example, the robust literature in the philosophy of perception that rejects the sensationalist view on the grounds that perceptual states with phenomenal character play an irreducible explanatory role in providing demonstrative thoughts with their justification (Campbell 2002; Roessler 2009; Smithies 2011). On this view, it seems utterly mysterious how we could come to think of an object as ‘this’ or ‘that’ object without experiencing that object as being perceptually present to us.

Just in virtue of the apple pie smelling delicious I know something about how the world might be. I could be wrong that the world is in fact that way, but just by there being something it is like for me to smell the aroma of the apple pie, I know that it could be the case that there is a freshly baked apple pie in the vicinity. In order for me to know this, the phenomenal character of my olfactory experience as of a freshly baked apple pie needs to tell me something about how the world is and my position with respect to it. A private sensation can hardly do this relational work, lacking as it does, any intentional structure. There is a certain kind of structural minimalism embodied in the sensational view that makes it unsuitable to fully account for the intentional structure of the phenomenal character of experience.

14 Such intentionality can be explicated without taking a stance on the extent to which the content of our perceptual experiences might figure in a justification for our demonstrative beliefs about the nature of an object we are perceiving.
1.4.1.2   Mental Paint

Gilbert Harman’s (1990) initial use of this term referred to a comparison between attending to a picture of a unicorn and attending to a tree. In the former case, one can also attend to the features of the painting that make it the case that the painting is a painting of a unicorn. One does this by attending to the texture of the paint rather than to the form of the unicorn the paint depicts. However, “…in the case of [a] visual experience of a tree...[one] is not aware of, as it were, the mental paint by virtue of which [one’s] experience is an experience of seeing a tree” (Harman 1990, 39). Harman does think one can be aware of relational properties in virtue of which one’s experience is about a tree, but not those intrinsic experiential properties in virtue of which one’s experience is an experience at all. Harman denies we can be aware of the latter because he does not think they exist.

Ned Block (1990; 2003) disagrees. He thinks that the intentional properties of mental states are different from their qualitative properties. The latter are what he calls ‘mental paint’. It is worth noting that Block tends to identify mental paint with qualia (Block 2003). I differentiate the two for the following reasons. I use ‘qualia’ to refer to any property that makes it the case that there is a mental state that there is something it is like to have but where a specification of that state’s phenomenal character will involve a description of an intentional object, that is, a description of how the world seems to the subject having the experience. Some examples would be my experience of a red apple, the painfulness of my scraped knee, etc. By contrast, I use ‘mental paint’ to refer to properties of mental states that might contribute to their phenomenal character without making a difference to our representations of what the world is like.\(^{15}\)

Mental paint is interesting because it is a concept that strongly resembles the concept of sensations in that mental paint is contrasted with those aspects of mental states that make them

\(^{15}\) Block (2003) makes an interesting distinction here between ‘mental paint’ and ‘mental oil’. The first of these refers to the intrinsic properties of mental states that make it the case that there is something it is like to be in that mental state and that objects we represent seem a certain way, e.g. the apple seems red. Mental oil, by contrast, is an intrinsic property of a mental state that contributes to its phenomenal character but only those phenomenal characters that have no intentional structure whatsoever.
intentional (Block 1990, 1995, 2003). However, Ned Block, the main contemporary proponent of this view, also acknowledges that phenomenal differences often do make representational differences (Block 1995, Siewert 1997). Thus, these properties are paint-like insofar as they do not necessarily tell us anything about how the world is but can sometimes do so if they are painted or projected outwards onto the external world.

The main difficulty with the notion of mental paint is that it is mysterious. The concept of mental paint is an improvement over the notion of sensations in that it acknowledges the possibility of phenomenal intentionality, the notion that differences in how the world seems can make a difference to what it is like for a subject who is conscious of those changes. However, the notion of mental paint is mysterious because it is defined in contrast with any and all of the aspects of phenomenal character I have discussed so far.

First, mental paint is defined in contrast with (phenomenal) representational content about how the world is. However, intentional differences can be phenomenal differences in experience. Thus, mental paint can be defined both in terms of intentional and non-intentional properties of mental states. Mental paint can also be both phenomenally internal (e.g. orgasm), and phenomenally external (e.g. cross modal differences in phenomenal character that don’t change representational content) (Block 1995). The fact that this notion cuts across such important distinctions in how we think of the structure of mental states starts to make it look too general to be informative. Further, Block also defines mental pain in contrast with subjective character. A phenomenal event that has no essential connection to the subject of experience or the world that the subject of experience is conscious of seems uninformative at best and at worst, quite confused. This is not a knock-down argument. However, I believe I have given reasons sufficient to focus my theoretical attention elsewhere.

1.4.1.3 Qualia

Debates about the status of phenomenal consciousness have moved on a bit since Ryle and Smart, but not that far. Indeed, their influence is quite palpable in some of the most central discussions that have dominated the contemporary literature. The discussion is no longer centered on sensations. Part of
the reason that talk of ‘sensations’ has become less prevalent is because philosophers have thought it
productive to jettison any terminological association with indirect realism about perception. Nevertheless, *qualia* abound in the current back and forth about phenomenal consciousness and as far as I can tell, *qualia* are just *sensations* with another name insofar as they still contribute nothing
to the functional life of the organism that has them. Like sensations, qualia are functionally redundant
intrinsic properties of a token mental states or a form of representational content that resists reductive
explanation amidst the smooth and seamless causal operations of an otherwise mindless cosmos.
Thus, like sensations, qualia either need to be eliminated (Dennett 1991) or identified — either at the
level of types or tokens — with brain states (Smart 1959).\(^{16}\) For example, Jaegwon Kim (2007) argues
for a strong distinction between mental causation and consciousness whereby all the relevant causal
explanations of mental events can be explained while qualia continue to dangle as functionally
redundant hangers on in the mind’s economy. In Chalmers (1996; 11),\(^{17}\) there is the distinction between
phenomenal concepts and psychological concepts as well as the easy and hard problems of
consciousness (Chalmers 2010; ch. 1).\(^{18}\)

I have been emphasizing the fact that qualia views inherit some of the problems of
sensationalist views. However, there are some important differences between them. Notably, qualia
seem to hang mostly on the 'emergent properties of objects' side of Smart's (1959) parsing of possible
ways to think about phenomenal consciousness. My analysis of sensations focused on the problematic
claim that what is interesting or special about phenomenal consciousness is that we have private,
ineffable sensations that contribute nothing to an account of how our experience acquaints us with an
environment through perception. In changing my focus to more contemporary discussions of qualia,

\(^{16}\) Qualia do not have to be associated with sensory properties, though they often are. Some philosophers are concerned
with cognitive phenomenology and for those who think that this is a genuine phenomenon, there would be cognitive
qualia.

\(^{17}\) Cited by Eilan (2000; 36).

\(^{18}\) Chalmers' book *The Character of Consciousness* (2010) is more or less a collection of the essays he wrote following
the upheaval that surrounded his first book *The Conscious Mind* (1996). Most of the essays in the subsequent volume
were published first elsewhere. I will cite from the (2010) volume for ease of reference.
I focus on the opposing tendency to describe phenomenal character exclusively in terms of the properties of objects we perceive.

Consider Frank Jackson’s (1982) knowledge argument. When we think about what the chromatically cloistered colour scientist Mary comes to know once she is able to escape the confines of her laboratory, her knowledge is put in terms of how the world appears (Jackson 1982; 1986). It is the redness of the red that she discovers for the first time upon seeing an apple. When we conceive of spectrum inversion, we hold the physical and functional information that pertains to coloured particulars invariant and posit two different perceivers with that same information available to them seeing different colours. All is dark inside for the philosophical zombie but its deficiency is defined in terms of a lack of perceptible properties in the face of undisturbed physical and behavioral states and capacities (Chalmers 1996).

It is vital to note that what ends up explaining the differences between the various cases in these thought experiments will certainly involve something going on inside the subjects having the experiences. More often than not, what a conscious subject will be said to have that its zombie duplicate lacks are intrinsic properties that inhere in token mental states had by the subject. Yet, our way of specifying the phenomenal character in the examples in these thought experiments involves talking about what the world is like. Even for a phenomenal internalist, who tries to explain qualitative character in terms of the intrinsic properties of mental states, the manner of specifying the what-it’s-like-ness of a phenomenally conscious experience adverts to the properties that seem to inhere in the objects that we perceive. Thus, even though phenomenal character is functionally redundant, it still purports to tell us something about how the world seems (Siewert 1997).

The main limitation with the notion of qualia in this discussion is that they do not account for the contribution that complex spatiotemporal structure makes to the phenomenal character of experience. When we represent the world as being a certain way, the phenomenal character of such states is constituted by a relationship that an embodied observer has to a spatiotemporal world in which that subject and its perceptual objects are embedded. When something looks to a subject as if it
were shaped in a certain way, the object’s appearing so is always embedded in a spatial context (Siewert 1997; 224). When we are visually aware of the shape of an object o in our visual field we are aware of o as the foreground over and against a background. The particular object to which we are attending can be seen in sharper relief over and against that background; the attended object is more salient than the unattended background. This structure is present both intra- and inter-modally. Within vision, something is seen as being in the foreground against a less salient visible background. Between different senses, some senses are phenomenally foregrounded against other senses. For example, if I am listening to a melody on my headphones, the nuances of the musical movement will be more salient than the tactile sensations in my posterior against the chair in which I am sitting.

Generally, if the perceptual background against which we are foregrounding a selected object of attention o in situation S1 is different from that of situation S2 while the object of attention o remains the same across the two contexts, then o will appear differently to a perceiving subject in S1 and S2. In each case, we will have a different phenomenal appearance. This is because the foregrounded object’s properties are put into relief for us by conscious attention against different backgrounds in each case (Watzl 2011). What it is like to see o will vary according to the way it is foregrounded with respect to a phenomenally salient background. There are, of course, aspects of the background of one’s experience that are not phenomenally salient. For example, there is nothing it is like to perceive the space behind my head. However, a phenomenally salient background is one that is related to the focus of one’s attention such that were the background to change, the phenomenal character of one’s perception of the foreground would also change, even if the only specifiable changes across S1 and S2 were happening in the background while the foreground stays invariant.

This process of shifting between foregrounding and backgrounding in perceptual attention invokes another structural aspect of appearances in phenomenally conscious experience, namely, time. The process of attentional capture is diachronic in nature. A phenomenally conscious experience of o appearing thus and so is always going to be temporally extended to some extent (Siewert 1997; 225). For things to appear thus and so in phenomenally conscious experience, we must invoke a phenomenal field structured by both space and time. The structure of phenomenal consciousness is
far more complex than the non-representational versions of the content view allow. Its nature can only
be specified by adverting to the complex relations that obtain between the perceiving subject and the
spatiotemporal field in which they are embedded.

I conclude that our understanding of phenomenal consciousness must move beyond the
threshold of an introspectable sensation or qualia (be it internal to the subject as a raw sensation or
the emergent property of an object). As long as the non-representational versions of the content view
analyze qualitative character only in terms of private events of the subject and properties of objects
such views will fail. They fail because they cannot do justice to the contribution made to our
phenomenal character by our embodied first-personal perspective on the spatiotemporal world in
which we live.

1.4.2 Representational Content

Representational approaches to phenomenal character that focus exclusively on qualitative character
but not subjective character do not have the same kinds of problems as their non-representational
counterparts. We have mental states that represent the way the world is and the content of these
representations can be as complex as required. Some of that content can be explained in
physical/functional terms; some of it cannot (cf. Chalmers 2010, ch. 12). If the qualitative character of
the content of our representations has irreducible spatiotemporal properties, this is no problem for
the representationalist. My response to the representationalist picture will occupy me for the rest of
the dissertation. I provide reasons against endorsing such a view in chapters 2 and 3. However, these
responses are indirect because they are deployed in a slightly different argumentative context.
Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, I offer some responses that are more direct.

1.4.2.1 A Cross-Cultural Philosophical Denial of Subjective Character

The critical points against phenomenal character offered by the reductive representationalist are
embodied with particular force by Jay Garfield (2016). His views are also noteworthy for being inspired
by a particular reading of Buddhist philosophy (Garfield 2015). Here I give a reconstruction and
response both to his systematic points about consciousness as well as to his preferred reading of Buddhism. I disagree with him on both counts.

There are two ways in which one might use a representationalist picture to explain away phenomenal consciousness. The first is reduction, which would be the view that what phenomenal consciousness is, and what phenomenal concepts refer to, is just the representational content of a perceptual state. A second, more dramatic strategy is elimination. Garfield (2015; 2016) is an eliminativist about phenomenal consciousness. According to him, “...phenomenal consciousness is an illusion” (Garfield 2015, 73). Because of this, “...there is nothing that it is like to experience something, nothing that it is like to have qualitative experience” (ibid). The difference between these two approaches is that the former is happy to admit that there is something it is like to have experience, but denies that there is anything it is like to have a phenomenally conscious experience over and above representing the perceptible properties of objects in perception. When we refer to experience with phenomenal concepts, we de facto refer to the representational content of our perceptual states. By contrast, the eliminative position endorsed by Garfield commits to the further claim that because all there is to experience is representing perceptible properties of objects, there is nothing it is like to perceive and all purported reference that might happen with phenomenal concepts is a cognitive illusion.

Garfield’s argument is to claim that we make a kind of category mistake by conflating a non-experiential instrument of perception for that which is perceived. There is something that a perceptual object is like, but there is nothing it is like to perceive an object (Garfield 2016). There are no experiential properties like qualitative characters over and above the perceptible properties of objects that we might perceive. This is the transparency thesis. If the transparency thesis is true, then there is also no subjective character. This inference functions under the assumption that for there to be a subjective character to experience, there must be private qualitative characters that we have access to. According to Garfield, “...it is almost irresistible to think of our experience as a constituting an inner domain populated by inner particulars that constitute the immediate objects of our experience, and contrasting with an outer domain of objects we know only indirectly” (Garfield 2015, 75). We are prone
to making this mistake of conflating the instrument of perception with the object of perception on account of our falsely believing that we have an internal world of consciousness that mediates our access to mind-independent particulars in perception. Thus, there are no qualitative characters; there are just the perceptible qualities of objects. And there is no subjective character, because there is no first-personal access to qualitative characters.19

Garfield recruits the Buddhist philosophers as allies in this dismissal of phenomenal consciousness. In particular, Garfield interprets the Tibetan philosopher Tsongkhapa’s commentary on the Madhyamaka philosopher Nāgārjuna as claiming that our fallible access to objects of perception is mirrored in our capacity for introspective access to the mental world (Tsong Khapa 2006). If that is right, then the so-called ‘stream of consciousness’ is not given to itself in any primitive way. Rather, our access to any mental processes is itself mediated by our conceptual schemes, thus motivating a kind of scepticism about the reliability of introspection. In the absence of any reliable, non-constructed mode of access to the mental, our motivation for positing a primitive self-disclosing layer of mental processing becomes untenable. Additionally, Garfield also attributes to the Buddhists a view that consciousness is thoroughly relational, that is, that it is always consciousness of something and that consciousness is nothing more over and above the causal processes that realize the organism’s perceptual and cognitive commerce with its environment (Garfield 2015, 124). As Garfield says, “Consciousness is always a relation between a sensory faculty and its object” (131). If Garfield’s picture is to be believed, then not only are we to reduce phenomenal consciousness to the representational content of token perceptual states. We are also actually confused. Phenomenal concepts are empty. They don’t refer to anything. There is nothing it is like to be a subject of experience. There are no qualitative characters and no subjective character.

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19 On the assumption that the above account is correct, it turns out that we are zombies. A zombie is a physical and functional duplicate of a person that lacks phenomenal consciousness. Philosophers have used the conceivability of a zombie to argue that consciousness cannot be given a physical or functional explanation (Chalmers 1996). However, if it turns out that there is nothing it is like to be a normal person, then there is no real difference between normal persons and philosophical zombies. Therefore, we are zombies.
1.4.2.2 Recovering Subjective Character

In this section, I respond to Garfield philosophically. In the next section, I reply to his reading of Buddhist philosophy. To begin, Garfield (2016) takes everyone he opposes to subscribe to a kind of internalism about qualitative characters. This assessment is unwarranted. There are plenty of philosophers who are phenomenal realists and externalists about qualitative characters (e.g. Campbell 1993). On this latter view, what makes it the case that there are qualitative characters is not that I have introspective access to the intrinsic properties of my token mental states that mediate my perceptual access to the objects to which they correspond. Rather, what makes it the case that there are qualitative characters is that they appear to the first-personal perspective of the organism. It is perfectly plausible to explain the first-personal access to the qualitative characters in terms of an organism having an embodied perspective on its environment rather than in terms of its having a private access to an internal world of qualia. Furthermore, whatever our metaphysics of perception might tell us about how we come to perceive the world, at the level of phenomenal character, the reddish quality that constitutes the qualitative character of my visual perception of an apple appears nowhere else but on the apple. So, to construe the phenomenal realist as being committed to an internal Cartesian theatre populated by qualitative characters is uncharitable.

A further unwarranted commitment that Garfield saddles the phenomenal realist with is the view that philosophical zombies are conceivable. A phenomenal realist need not accept this commitment. As Evan Thompson points out, “…many perceptual and motor abilities evidently depend on that body’s being a subjectively lived body” (Thompson 2007, 231). The idea that being able to feel the living body might be constitutive of some forms of behavior is a rejection of the zombie hypothesis because it denies that there might be a physical and functional duplicate whose behavioral capabilities are the same as a phenomenally conscious subject.20 Yet in denying this scenario, one need not be an anti-realist about phenomenal character. Indeed, on Thompson’s view, and here I follow him,

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20 I will address this question in more detail in chapter 8.
“Without proprioceptive and kinesthetic experience, for example, many kinds of normal perception and motor actions cannot happen” (ibid). Therefore, it is not fair to saddle the phenomenal realist with a commitment to the zombie-hypothesis. One might deny the latter, while endorsing the former position. It is open to the phenomenal realist to affirm intentionalism, the view that consciousness is always consciousness of something. Garfield wrongly assumes that to affirm the reality of phenomenal character is to be committed to the view that consciousness is a monadic property with no relation to anything outside of itself. It is perfectly consistent to affirm that consciousness is always intentional while also maintaining that in being directed towards an object intentionally, the object is intended from within a phenomenal field, one that there is something it is like for the organism to inhabit first-personally.21

Further, it is worth noting that there are perceptual states that essentially represent the world as being a certain way along with the subject who is having that experience. For example, in having certain active perceptions of the world (e.g. someone throwing a ball at me), I experience both the ball and myself as a subject of experience as constitutive elements of the perception (Peacocke 2014). It seems that representationalism about phenomenal character doesn’t say anything about subjectivity because its entire strategy is to analyse phenomenal character in terms of content. But the representationalist is free to insist that any and all seemingly subjective aspects of phenomenal character are actually just qualitative contents. Therefore, I conclude this section with some considerations on how the embodied perspective of the organism is an essential ingredient for understanding the phenomenal character of experience.

21 Another way of putting this point is to say that in affirming the reality of subjective character, we are not committed to denying that consciousness is essentially related to things outside of itself. Indeed, those phenomenologists who affirm subjective character in terms of the reflexivity of pre-reflective consciousness, do so by affirming the view that mental acts like perception and imagination reveal themselves in disclosing their objects to the subject who is having them. This reconciles the idea that there is a subjective character to experience with the idea that consciousness is always relational. Phenomenal realism does not necessarily fall afoul of intentionalism. I develop this point in more detail in chapter 2.
The centrality of the organism’s perspective in accounting for phenomenal character falls right out of Nagel’s considerations of how points of view fundamentally contribute to there being something it is like for an organism to perceive the world. What else would account for the perspectival factors of phenomenal consciousness but the organization of the body’s sensory receptors? It is in virtue of being a limited sensory being that the world shows up to us as available from a point of view. It is by being situated in the world through embodiment that things appear thus and so. Here’s Charles Siewert’s statement of the idea (1997; 225):

It is far from clear that it could seem to some [subject] just the way it does to us for it to look as if things are shaped and situated in certain ways over time, though it did not seem to [that subject] as it does to us to feel where our bodies are, amidst what visually appears shaped and situated, or though it never seemed to [that subject] as it does to us for it to feel as if something is where it looks to us as if it is...the way it visually seems to us as if things are situated cannot ultimately be divorced entirely from the way it kinesthetically and tactually seems to us as if our bodies and other things are situated, so that our visual experience cannot be ripped out of its phenomenal context and reinserted into a radically different one while entirely preserving its phenomenal character.

What it is like for an object to seem thus and so to an organism recruits a robust array of structural features beyond the perceivable properties of the object. Those include a phenomenal field of space and time in which the organism feels itself to be situated as an embodied perceiver and agent. Without these structural features, it is unclear how we could claim that features of the world appear thus and so and that in so appearing are phenomenally conscious experiences. What it means for there to be something it is like for an organism is for such an organism to have an embodied perspective on the spatiotemporal world. There is a relationship between subject and world — the subject’s first-personal point of view on the world — which not only grants it access to the world but also limits that access in various ways, thus opening up the possibility of error. Consciousness is that particular form of access to the world that we inhabit by being the types of organisms that we are (Nagel 1974; Hoerl 2015).

Central to the account I will develop in the chapters that follow will be a deeper understanding of the living body as an affective locus for the embodiment of a first-person perspective (Colombetti 2014).
All content views agree that consciousness can be analyzed in terms of things that we are conscious of. By talking about consciousness of in this instance my intention is to point out that all of these accounts share a commitment to the view that through perception or introspection, we can become aware of qualitative characters. In this way, all these views try to talk of consciousness as a content that is apprehended when a subject is in a certain mental state. What they disagree about is how to type-identify this content and whether in so doing there are any prospects for reductive analysis.

Thus, my main problem with Garfield’s (2015; 2016) attempt to eliminate phenomenal character from mental discourse is that he saddles the phenomenal realist with commitments they do not need to take on. More generally, my complaint against content views per se is that they are incomplete. When I behold the world, or introspect the contents of my own thoughts and perceptions, it is true that I encounter a rich phenomenal field of qualitative contents. However, when I say ‘I encounter’ I mean that the world is qualitatively encoded for me precisely because I encounter it by living through a first-person perspective. I have a finite point of view — constructed by the biological organization of the living body I inhabit — that grants me a kind of phenomenal access to the world. When theorists try to explain consciousness only in terms of its content, they conflate the observed with the observer, the apprehended with that which apprehends. In order to understand consciousness fully, we must develop an account that explains not just the qualitatively encoded world but also the subjectivity that apprehends that world by living through an embodied first-person perspective.

1.4.2.3 Recovering a Non-Eliminative Buddhist Approach to Consciousness

Having provided some philosophical reasons for rejecting Garfield’s eliminativism about phenomenal character, I now offer some critical remarks about his reading of Buddhist philosophy. I do this as a way of prefacing my own approach to Buddhist philosophy in the chapters that follow. Contrary to Garfield (2016), I rely on a reading of certain Buddhist philosophers as robust phenomenal realists who have much to offer us by way of insight into the affective deep-structure of the stream of consciousness.
I begin with some observations that Garfield would surely agree with. Buddhism is a polysemous philosophical tradition. Garfield’s preferred reading emphasizes the Madhyamaka tradition, whose critique of fundamental ontology is well known. In particular, Madhyamika Buddhists like Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti are at pains to reject any notion of that any particular (dharma) has an intrinsic nature (svābhava). However, this position is developed over and against other Buddhist schools that strongly endorse the idea that there is a fundamental level of mental processing that can be apprehended through the development of skillful meditative attention. Indeed, in the Pāli Abhidhamma-piṭaka commentaries, we see the notion of a paramattha sacca or “ultimate truth” that characterizes four different kinds of dhamma or basic particular events, two of which are mental in nature (Abhi-s). There is physical form (rūpa), consciousness or mind (citta), mental concomitants that structure basic moments of citta (cetasika), and the unconditional deathless element, nibbāna. It is all well and good to align oneself with a strand of Buddhist philosophy that is critical of the Abhidharmika project. However, it is important to note that Buddhist philosophers have often thought of conscious mental processing as being a fundamental constituent of reality and not just an illusory cognitive construct.

Garfield has claimed that for Buddhists, consciousness is always a relation between an object and a sensory faculty (Garfield 2015, 131). I do not think this is a viable strategy for construing the Buddhist position on the mind as one that is friendly to eliminativism about phenomenal character. Insofar as Garfield is trying to explain away phenomenal character, he construes the Buddhist philosophical analyses of consciousness as being committed to the claim that consciousness is nothing over and above the causal relations that obtain between perceptible objects and their associated sensory faculties. This is incorrect. Whenever Buddhist philosophers are emphasizing the causal relations obtaining between various mental processes and their objects, some form of consciousness is always operating as one of the basic relata of the causal system. Thus, it is not true that consciousness is nothing over and above the causal relations that obtain between sensory objects and their associated sensory faculties. Consciousness is itself one of the relata, and it depends for its existence on objects and functioning sensory systems, but that is not the same as consciousness being reductively analyzed
in terms of objects and sensory systems. Whether ‘consciousness’ here is phenomenal or not is an open question.

There is good reason to think that we ought to regard Buddhist analysis of consciousness as friendly to contemporary notions of phenomenal character. Consider the basic conceptual scheme of the five khandhas (SN III 47-48; Vetter 2000): physical form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), cognition (saññā)\(^{23}\), formations (saṅkhāra) and consciousness (viññāṇa). At least two of these notions are arguably phenomenal concepts; namely, vedanā which denotes the hedonic aspect of experience that is felt as being either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral and viññāṇa which denotes our capacity for discriminating awareness of perceptual objects. For Garfield’s analysis to hold, he would need specific arguments as to how to understand both of these concepts as non-phenomenal. This is not outside the scope of possibility (Siderits 2011). The point that needs to be borne in mind however, is that many Buddhist philosophers and contemporary scholars of Buddhist philosophical psychology have operated under the straightforward interpretation of these ideas as being experiential. Therefore, it is not enough to simply claim that consciousness is nothing over and above the causal processes of mental functioning because it is plausible that several of the basic constituents of the causal relata are themselves forms of consciousness. To render the Buddhist position eliminativist about phenomenal character, a reductive analysis of the Buddhist conceptions of consciousness will be required, and such an analysis must acknowledge that for Buddhists, concepts of consciousness are explanatorily basic, and not reductively supervenient on non-conscious objects and mental processes.

This latter point is particularly salient in the case of the eighteen dhātuḥ (SN II 140). This is a group of six functions with three elements per function. The division of six is according to each of the five canonical senses with a sixth mental sense. Each triad within the sixfold system is composed of an object with modally specific perceptible properties (rūpa-dhātu), a functioning sensory system that is appropriately sensitive to the relevant object (e.g. the eye system, cakkhu-dhātu), and finally, a

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\(^{23}\) This term is often translated as ‘perception’. This is misleading as this capacity denotes a subject’s ability to categorize particulars in perception under concepts or equivalence classes in working memory.
modally specific conscious event (*viññāṇa-dhātu*). The point here is that consciousness is a primitive relatum over and above the object and the sensory system which is sensitive to it. Thus, to construe the Buddhist position on consciousness as one where consciousness is *nothing* but a causal relation between object and sensory system is too quick. It may be possible to reduce Buddhist concepts of consciousness to non-phenomenal concepts, but that is not the same as claiming that what it is to be conscious for Buddhists is accounted for merely in terms of the causal connection between an object and a sensory receptor.

One final point. Buddhist analyses of causal relations and mental functioning happen against the backdrop of a soteriological life-world of contemplative reflection on the ubiquity of existential suffering (Coseru 2015). It cannot be denied that Buddhist philosophers as a whole are in agreement that the mind and the world are constructed in various ways. But just because the subject of experience is constructed does not mean that phenomenal character is an illusion, even if it is in some way constructed and elaborated upon by the interpretative processes of cognition and affect. It is perfectly consistent to uphold the view that all consciousness is conditioned by the construction processes of the mind (*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇam*) without drawing the extra step of denying that there is anything that it is like to be a subject with a constructed consciousness. Construction does not necessarily entail illusion (Thompson 2015).

**Conclusion**

I began by making an important distinction between two components of the phenomenal character of phenomenally conscious experiences. Phenomenally conscious experiences have both qualitative and subjective characters. I argued that Nagel’s (1974) influential account of consciousness can motivate views that focus on either qualitative or subjective character. My argument is that too much philosophizing on consciousness has focused on the qualitative aspects at the expense of subjectivity. None of the approaches to consciousness that focus only on qualitative character are sufficient to account for the subjective character of experience. Thus, I have reconstructed a reading of Nagel that puts this aspect of phenomenal character at the forefront of the discussion. I call this the embodied perspectival view of subjective character. Having given a preliminary outline of the embodied
perspectival view of subjective character, in the next chapter I turn my attention to some recent proposals about subjective character and the extent to which these are compatible with the embodied perspectival approach.
2
Some Varieties of Subjectivity

...the organism may be called a sounding-board, which every change of consciousness, however slight, may make reverberate.

William James from *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol II. p. 450

Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide further argument for what I call the embodied perspectival view of subjective character (EP). The embodied perspectival view of subjective character is the following:

**EP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious experience is at least partially constituted by the organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

This view is another way of stating the second premise of the master argument I laid out in the introduction. Here I will argue for this view by surveying some contemporary approaches to the subjective character of experience.

Current opinions on subjectivity tend to flounder on one of two problems: one concerns a problematic assumption that we can explain subjectivity in terms of what the subject is conscious of in experience; the other is to leave any analysis of the subject out of the view. In spite of these two difficulties, my larger aim is to gather together the various positive threads contained in these views and add one of my own that was addressed in my initial discussion of Nagel in chapter 1. Specifically, I will argue that all the views of subjectivity I canvass here neglect the fact that the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience is constitutively linked with the embodied perspective of the organism having the experience. Because of this neglect, most of the extant views on subjective character are either wrong or incomplete.

To begin, I canvass a number of different views from the contemporary literature that focus on the subjective character of experience (§2.1) and explain what each of them has to offer to a positive characterization of this feature of our experience (§2.2). I then re-deploy some of the resources from my reconstruction of Nagel’s view in chapter 1 in conjunction with views canvassed at the outset of this
chapter to provide an argument in favor of the embodied perspectival view of subjective character (§2.3). In §2.4 I consider two important objections to the embodied perspectival view before offering some conclusions.

2.1 Contemporary Views of Subjective Character

There are a number of contemporary philosophers whose discussions of consciousness focus explicitly on subjectivity (Levine 2004; McGinn 1997; Kriegel 2009; Zahavi 2005; Zahavi and Kriegel 2015). My discussion here builds on their important contributions. Their views provide a conceptual foundation for my account of subjective character. Nevertheless, I will argue that these views do not give as much weight as they should to the embodied perspective of the organism. At the outset, I also want to note that while these views are all trying to articulate something similar, they are not equivalent. They all have different points of emphasis and inclusion. One such view claims that subjectivity is something to be explained by a particular way that the qualitative world appears. By contrast another claims that subjectivity is a kind of internal relation that subjects have to their own experiences. Still another thesis is that it is the subject itself that is also present in experience along with the experience’s content. Getting clear about these various permutations will occupy us for a good amount of this chapter.

2.1.1 Block on Subjectivity

My discussion of contemporary accounts of subjectivity begins with Ned Block. In a short section of ‘Consciousness, accessibility and the mesh between psychology and neuroscience’ (2007), Block discusses what he calls ‘Awareness’ or ‘me-ishness’. Block writes:

We may suppose that it is platitudinous that when one has a phenomenally conscious experience, one is in some way aware of having it. Let us call the fact stated by this claim — without committing ourselves on what exactly that fact is — the fact that phenomenal consciousness requires Awareness… Sometimes people say Awareness is a matter of having a state whose content is in some sense ‘presented to the self or having a state that is ‘for me’ or that comes with a sense of ownership or that has ‘me-ishness’… (Block 2007, 484).

Block then distinguishes three different modes of analyzing Awareness, beginning with one that is ‘minimal’ and another that is ‘higher order’. Awareness of one’s own experiences is minimal just if
one’s Awareness discloses one’s experience to oneself in the same way that smiling or dancing acquaints a smiler or a dancer with their smiling or dancing: one knows by doing. One’s Awareness is higher-order if there is another token state which takes a first order representation as its intentional object. On this view, it is this higher order relation that constitutes Awareness. The third option is a same-order view that purports to be a middle-path between the two previous views. Same-order views are like minimal views in that they posit no second-order mental states in order for there to be awareness, and they share with the higher-order views the desire to construe awareness as an intentional relation that takes a first order representation as its object. The difference between them is that same-order views think a state can be intentionally directed towards itself.

Block aligns himself with either the first or third approaches. Block’s explanatory goals do not require him to be more precise because his only point here is to acknowledge that we have no *a priori* reason to build in a conceptual connection between phenomenal consciousness and cognitive access. A minimal or same-order view is capable of explaining how we are aware of our own experiences without claiming that we have cognitive access to the content of those experiences.

The problem with this view is that it is too vague. Block runs together at least three different ideas. The first is that we are aware of our own experiences. The second is that a subject of experience is present in experience. Lastly, the content of experience is present to the subject. To these I will add a fourth, namely, that subjects stand in relationships of ownership or mineness to their experiences. These are not obviously equivalent notions (Guillot 2016). Therefore, in the analyses that follow, I will be careful to distinguish between these different ideas.

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24 I follow him in this. I do not think that the higher-order theory is a viable road to an understanding of subjective character or consciousness more generally. There is a substantive literature on this topic and I do not wish to get embroiled in its many subtleties. To my mind, there are two decisive problems for the view. Briefly, it’s not at all clear how a non-phenomenal second order state (either thought-based or perceptual) could render a first-order representation phenomenal. In the event that this phenomenality bestowing relation between first- and second-order states can be rendered intelligible, the question of regress looms. Namely, in virtue of what does a second-order state gain its phenomenality bestowing power? Perhaps the second-order state needs to be the intentional object of a third-order state. For the *locus classicus* of the higher-order thought view, see Rosenthal (1986). For a monograph-length treatment, see Carruthers (1996). See also Carruthers (2016) for a nice survey of the view’s various permutations. For an incisive set of criticisms, see Siewert (1997) and Seager (2004).
2.1.2 Phenomenal Access to Qualia

One way of trying to think about subjectivity — one not included in my brief discussion of Block — is the idea that the qualitative character of experience is present in a particular way. We have a particular kind of phenomenal access to our qualia. On this view, subjectivity is to be explained in terms of how qualia are present. Subjectivity is a kind of mode of presentation of qualia:

**MPQ. Mode of Presentation of Qualia** — Subjective character is to be explained in terms of the 'substantive' and 'determinate' mode of presentation of qualitative characters.

Joseph Levine (2004) has provided the strongest version of this view. He contrasts our use of phenomenal concepts — concepts used to think about the phenomenal character of our experience (e.g. ‘reddishness’) — and ordinary physical and functional concepts like ‘cat’ or ‘water’ or even ‘red’. According to Levine, phenomenal concepts have a ‘substantive’ and ‘determinate’ mode of presentation while natural kind and other physical and functional concepts do not. A mode of presentation is a cognitive relation between a knowing subject and a property that it thinks about with a concept. This relation puts a subject in touch with what they are thinking about by representing the property with its concept. It is the nature of the 'being in touch with' relation that differs in cases of thinking involving phenomenal vs. non-phenomenal concepts.

Levine’s argument begins with a pair of premises designed to explicate precisely the important presentational features of qualitative characters:

**L1.** Qualitative characters have a substantive mode of presentation.

Phenomenal concepts are substantive because when we think about qualitative characters with them, the qualitative characters themselves are present to us. In this way, phenomenal concepts are ‘presentationally thick’. By contrast, the mode of presentation of non-phenomenal properties are ‘presentationally thin’ (2004, 8). Phenomenal concepts are presentationally thick because thinking about qualitative characters involves the presence of those very characters for me. Whether I am perceiving, imagining, remembering, or thinking about red, there is a reddishness that is present to
me in all of these intentional acts. To think about reddishness entails that reddishness is somehow present to me, just in virtue of my thinking about it. Thinking about non-phenomenal kinds does not involve the very presence of that which is thought about.

**L2.** The mode of presentation of qualitative characters is also determinate.

The presence of qualitative characters in experience acquaints us with specific characters that can be defined by us with phenomenal concepts without any necessary reference to properties outside of the qualitative character that is present to us, including physical and functional properties. The reddishness of the apple is a relevant example here. Determinacy consists in the distinctive way that qualitative characters are present and capable of being thought about with concepts that refer exclusively to those properties and no others. It can seem to me that the apple is red regardless of whatever other physical or functional facts might be true of the apple.

The two premises analyzed above form two conjuncts of the antecedent of the following conditional:

**L3.** If the modes of presentation of qualitative characters are substantive and determinate, then when we think about them with phenomenal concepts, there is a special cognitive relation to a subject, qualitative characters are for me.

The conclusion follows:

**L-C1/MPQ.** In thinking about qualitative characters with phenomenal concepts, there is a special cognitive relation to a subject, qualitative characters are for me.

I have used the appropriate terminology to frame (L-C1) in terms of the rest of the premises in the argument. However, it is important to note that (L-C1) is equivalent to (MPQ).

The question now arises: what is the nature of this special cognitive relation? Levine thinks that this is almost impossible to articulate positively. One specific thing we can say, is that it is in virtue of qualitative characters being specially related to the subject of experience that the subject has a first-personal perspective on those characters. Levine tries to use the presentational asymmetry between
phenomenal and non-phenomenal concepts to argue that consciousness cannot be explained in physical or functional terms.

**L4.** If thinking about qualitative characters instantiates a special cognitive relation, then qualitative characters are not physically explicable.

The motivation for thinking that the consequent of this conditional follows from its antecedent is the following. If there is a radical asymmetry between how qualitative characters are represented by phenomenal concepts, on one hand, and other kinds of properties being represented by non-phenomenal concepts, on the other, then it’s not clear how we could use anything but phenomenal concepts to talk about phenomenal character. If we can’t use physical and functional concepts to explain the presence of qualitative characters to a subject, then physicalism cannot explain consciousness. Therefore, the conclusion follows:

**L-C2.** Qualitative characters are not physically explicable.

The conclusion is open ended. It does not commit to anti-physicalism because even though it might be the case that we can’t explain consciousness physically, this does not entail that consciousness isn’t physical.

It is worth noting that this argument doesn’t have much of a defense against a view that claims that phenomenal concepts refer to physical states in a special way. That is, one might hold that this special relation between a phenomenal concept and the qualitative characters they seem to refer to only seems to hold, but doesn’t hold in fact (Metzinger 2004). It is also possible that a physical explanation of this relation might be forthcoming, say when we get finished with neuroscience. One might reply that this kind of reductive optimism is missing the point, however. That is, to hold that the special intentional relation is only an appearance whose reality is *a posteriori* identical with some functional system in the brain would be to help oneself to a view from nowhere, it would be to try and fail to say something about the first-personal perspective from a third-personal perspective in a way that abandons the very explanadum (Nagel 1974). Nevertheless, I leave such metaphysical issues aside.
What is important is the characterization of subjective character embedded in the account; at this juncture, I take no sides in the metaphysical debate about the hard-problem of consciousness.\textsuperscript{25}

What is important about this view is that Levine tries to explicate subjectivity in terms of the mode of presentation of qualia. In Levine’s words: “One way of elucidating what being ‘for the subject’ comes to is that the contents of conscious experience are presented in this distinctively substantive and determinate mode” (Levine 2004, 9). Part of his motivation for explaining subjectivity in this way is that he doesn’t think that, “...we currently have any idea how to explain subjectivity, especially not in physical, or non-mental terms” (ibid). The problem with this view is that it doesn’t tell us very much about subjectivity itself. It certainly tells us something positive, namely, that subjectivity is that in virtue of which qualia seem to be such a puzzle. It is because qualia are present in a special way for subjectivity. On this view, subjectivity is the reason why qualia have a substantive and determinate mode of presentation.

In my view, however, Levine’s account is incomplete. To explain subjectivity requires more than explaining how subjectivity conditions that which appears to it. We still need an explanation of what subjectivity is, what a subject of experience is, and how these relate to qualitative character. Levine focuses on an explanation of the last of these three issues, but this leaves the substantive task untouched.

\textit{2.1.3 The Presence of the Subject}

Colin McGinn (1997) agrees with Levine about subjectivity and qualitative character being equally important aspects of consciousness, and that these phenomena are utterly mysterious. However, McGinn’s approach is importantly different from Levine’s. Instead of focusing on the special cognitive relation that obtains between a subject and its qualitative characters in virtue of the former thinking about the latter with phenomenal concepts, McGinn claims that being conscious of the world instantiates a special kind of intentionality at the level of perception. By ‘intentionality’, McGinn is

\textsuperscript{25} Though, I will say something about it in the final chapter.
referring to a world-oriented feature of perceptual states that makes it the case that such states are about certain features, properties, or objects in the world. On this view, consciousness is ‘Janus-faced’ because conscious perceptual states simultaneously disclose a world of qualities and a subject of experience (McGinn 1997, 298). By contrast, non-phenomenal perceptual states only necessarily refer to the world. There is no necessary inclusion of the subject of experience in the content of such a state precisely because there is no experience, only the presence of a non-conscious mental state.

We can formulate this approach to subjective character in the following way:

**SO. The Subject and Object of Experience are Co-Present** – Subjective character is to be explained by the dual intentional structure of token perceptual states. Phenomenally conscious perceptual states simultaneously disclose, from a first-personal perspective, objects in the world and the subject who is perceiving the world by having that perceptual state.

In spite of this important difference between approaching consciousness from the point of view of intentionality rather than phenomenal concepts, McGinn’s argumentative strategy is similar to Levine’s.

Consider the following reconstruction of McGinn’s argument:

**M1. Phenomenally conscious perceptual states disclose a world of qualities and a subject of experience. They are in this way, ‘Janus-faced’.

Premise (M1) is the equivalent of (L1) and (L2). It establishes that in conscious experiences there is something particular about how conscious states represent the world. They do so not only by

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26 The focus on intentionality rather than on the reference of phenomenal concepts side-steps a lurking objection: the so-called ‘phenomenal concepts strategy’ (Loar 1990; Balog 2009). This objection states that the reason it seems like (L4) is true is not because of anything special about qualitative characters themselves, but because of the special referring properties of the phenomenal concepts we use to represent qualitative characters, the latter of which are held to be properties of the brain. I do not have the space to get into the details of this debate.
purporting to disclose what some part of the world is like, but they also disclose to a subject of experience that there is something it is like to be when one is conscious of the world.  

**M2.** If phenomenally perceptual states disclose both the world and the subject of the perceptual state, then such perceptual states instantiate a special form of intentionality.

This special kind of intentionality needs to be understood in contrast to non-phenomenal intentionality. For McGinn, non-phenomenal intentionality can be given a physical or functional explanation. For example, ordinary non-conscious intentional states might be thought of in terms of the activation of neural populations that co-vary with sensory input. There is no need to speak of a conscious subject in analysing such states. Phenomenally conscious intentional states are special because the world is disclosed for a subject of experience. The self is experienced in being intentionally oriented toward the world. Therefore, we can derive the consequent as our first conclusion:

**M-C1.** Phenomenally conscious perceptual states instantiate a special form of intentionality.

In McGinn’s words, such states are, ‘shot through with subjectivity’ (1997, 300).

Consider the following conditional:

**M3.** If conscious intentional states instantiate a special form of intentionality, then such states are not physically explicable.

The reasoning here is analogous to the (MPQ) view in that because phenomenal intentionality instantiates the special property of disclosing a phenomenal world and the subject who beholds that world, we cannot explicate phenomenal intentionality with physical or functional concepts. Therefore:

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*27 When I use the demonstrative ‘that’ I do not mean to say that the awareness in question is propositional. Further, at this juncture, we can remain agnostic as to the status of the subject. It is consistent with this view that there ultimately is no subject. I will have more to say about this below.

*28 In §2.1.5 I will explain why characterizing the relation between a token mental state and the subject having it in intentional terms is problematic.
M-C2. Conscious states are not physically explicable.

McGinn thinks that the asymmetry between conscious and non-conscious forms of intentionality is a difference of kind, one that stymies the explanatory pretensions of physicalism.

McGinn has gone one step further than Levine by claiming that there is a dual intentionality in each token perceptual state rather than a singular one that discloses the way that qualitative characters are present. Token perceptual states disclose a world of qualities and a subject of experience who has those qualities in view. What is special about consciousness is that the states that instantiate it disclose a subject of experience for whom the world is the case (SO). The difference between Levine’s view and McGinn’s view is that McGinn thinks that there is a subject of experience disclosed to itself in the phenomenal character of experience and that this is something in its own right over and above the special mode of presentation of qualia emphasized by Levine.

However, the same question remains that I posed at the end of my brief treatment of Levine: what is a subject? This is a very difficult question to answer. Further, how do token mental states disclose the subjects who enjoy them? McGinn has invoked the subject of experience in order to say something about the phenomenally conscious intentionality. In particular, he thinks that the presence of the subject in the phenomenal character of perceptual intentionality is what differentiates phenomenally conscious states from their unconscious counterparts. This view goes one step further than Levine’s by giving an explanation of subjectivity in terms of the presence of the subject of experience in the phenomenal character of perceptual experience. However, McGinn’s view is again similar to Levine’s strategy, in that it invokes the notion of a subject of experience to explain some feature of consciousness — in this case, phenomenal intentionality — without explaining what the relation between the subject and its experiences is, or indeed, what the subject is.

2.1.4 Subjectivity as Mineness

Philosophers concerned with subjectivity have tried to account for this relation between subjects and their experiences in terms of subjects having a certain kind of ownership over their experiences. For example, Dan Zahavi (2005) has argued that the mark of subjectivity is that phenomenally conscious
mental states are owned, presumably by the subject of experience (cf. Ganeri 2012; Strawson 1975/1990). Our experiences are present to us as subjects in a way that the objects represented by our states are not. In the case of our perception of objects, there is a subject-object distinction in the intentional relation, in the case of our acquaintance with our experience, there is no such distinction.\textsuperscript{29} In this way our token mental states exhibit a sense of belonging to us as the subjects of experience. My mental states are \textit{mine} because they are given first-personally in a distinctive way.

This view is thus importantly different from (MPQ) as discussed above. For the proponent of (MPQ), what is distinctive about our subjective character is the way that qualitative characters show up in experience; it is the way that the content of experience is manifest to us. The view under discussion here however says something more: it says that the experiences themselves are present in someway over and above their content.

One might rightly ask why they should take on this more phenomenologically suspect view of what is present in experience. In what follows, I will try to make this view clear. Additionally, I will also distinguish two senses of phenomenal ownership, one strong and one minimal. After explaining why the strong sense is not a tenable candidate for a constitutive feature of subjectivity, I will introduce the minimal sense (Zahavi 2005). In the following subsection, I will then develop my analysis of the minimal phenomenal ownership view in terms of the notion of ‘for-me-ness’.

2.1.4.1 A Positive Argument for Phenomenal Ownership

Here is a reconstruction of Zahavi’s argument for subjectivity being explained by an invariant acquaintance relation of phenomenal ownership or mineness (2005, 15-6):

\textbf{ZM1.} There is something it is like for a subject to have an experience.

\textsuperscript{29} At the level of metacognition, it is possible to take one’s experiences as objects because at the cognitive level, our experiences are the thoughts we are having. When we engage in metacognition, we think about those thoughts as objects. However, at the level of pre-reflective perceptual experience, there is no such subject-object structure.
Zahavi takes this to be a widely agreed upon phenomenological datum. I read (ZM1) as a re-statement of Nagel’s (1974) view that there is something it is like to be a conscious organism. It’s just that in this formulation Zahavi has substituted ‘subject’ for ‘organism’.

**ZM2.** If there is something it is like for a subject to have an experience, then the subject must be somehow acquainted with its experience.

This claim begins to differentiate Zahavi’s approach from those that we have looked at thus far. Consider (SO) by way of contrast. For (SO) experience discloses both some subsection of the world and the subject itself. It is the mutual disclosure of both in perception that constitutes the phenomenal character of a given token perceptual state. By contrast, in the current case, the claim is that there being something it is like to be a subject of experience entails that in addition to being aware of the content of our experiences, we are aware of those very experiences. Zahavi here is trying to make good on the need to explain what the relation is exactly between the subject and its experiences.

If (ZM1) and (ZM2) both hold, then the conclusion plainly follows. Namely:

**ZM-C1.** The subject is acquainted with its experiences.

Specifying the nature of this acquaintance is very difficult. Every view we have canvassed so far agrees on this. One negative claim that seems to have some plausibility is that, if one maintains that the subject is acquainted with its experiences, one should not qualify that relation in intentional language. Namely, to say that we are aware of our experiences is already to incorporate a tacit subject-object distinction. Such a distinction may be appropriate for characterizing the relation between a perceptual state and the object or state of affairs it purports to represent, but this sort of relation is not appropriate

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30 This is not an insignificant substitution as the notion of a ‘subject’ often carries with it the connotation of mysteriousness. Subjects may or may not exist. Organisms on the other hand certainly exist. I will develop this point in §2.3.

31 At this juncture, Zahavi’s fully developed theory of subjectivity is beyond the scope of my analysis. As it turns out, Zahavi will equate subjectivity with a kind of minimal self.
for characterizing the basic acquaintance or ownership relation that a subject has to its own states. This latter relation is importantly different from the former.

One reason for this difference is the following:

**ZM3.** The phenomenal characters of token perceptual experiences differ according to the qualitative intentional contents of those states.

Zahavi’s example is that there is a phenomenal difference between watching the sunset and listening to a symphony. The contribution to the phenomenal character of our experience made by token perceptual states varies with the kind of perceptual state one is in and also with how such a state represents the world to be. However, the basic acquaintance relation that a subject has to its own experiences will obtain regardless of what experience they happen to be having.

We can now formulate the fourth premise as follows:

**ZM4.** If the phenomenal characters of token conscious perceptual states differ according to the qualitative intentional content of those states, and the subject is acquainted with each state, then each token perceptual state shares something with the others beyond their all having a particular qualitative intentional content, namely, they all share an acquaintance relation to the subject.

Zahavi’s proposal is that this sameness consists in an acquaintance relation defined by the subject’s ownership of its experiences, or that the subject’s experiences have a quality of *mineness* to them. In his words: “One commonality is the quality of *mineness*, the fact that the experiences are characterized by first-personal givenness” (Zahavi 2005, 16). Because experiences share this characterization, we can conclude that:

**ZM-C2.** Each conscious perceptual state shares something with the others that goes beyond their differing qualitative intentional contents, namely, the subject’s acquaintance relation to them.

This notion of ‘first-personal givenness’ is meant to articulate the intimate relation that a subject has to its own experiences. In perceiving an apple on the table, I pre-reflectively live through the act of that perception. This makes it mine in a way that it could never be yours. Thus, my experience of the apple
is given to me first-personally. This kind of ownership can be had by any phenomenally conscious subject. Insofar as mineness is a quality of experience, then it can be shared across distinct experiences and subjects. In this way, mineness is a structural feature of consciousness as such, rather than an idiosyncratic feature of a particular subject.

There are three points that need to be kept in mind. The first is that Zahavi has introduced the idea that subjectivity is to be accounted for in terms of a subject being acquainted with its own experiences in addition to those things in the world that the experiences are about. The second is that this special kind of acquaintance with one’s experience is to be understood as those experiences being owned by the subject. Third, ownership or mineness is equated with a kind of first-personal givenness of experiences to the subject.

2.1.4.2 Two Senses of Phenomenal Ownership

Here I want to consider some important qualifications concerning the second of these points. I will address the first and third points in §2.3. Namely, as I mentioned at the outset, it is important to distinguish two senses of phenomenal ownership, both of which are important, but only one of which could plausibly be construed as constitutive of subjective character.

The first sense of mineness is one of robust agency and authorship over one’s experiences. On this view of mineness, there is an explicit sense of possessing one’s experiences as a kind of mental property (in both senses of ‘property’); experiences are mine. One of the problems with accounting for subjectivity in terms of this robust sense of mineness is that there can be experiences that don’t seem like they are owned in this way by the subjects having them. For example, in thought and memory insertion cases, subjects experience thoughts and memories that do not seem as if they are their own, in the sense that they do not feel agency over or authorship of them (Zahavi 2005; Zahavi and Kriegel 2015; Guillot 2016). Additionally, the Buddhist philosophical tradition, generally speaking, holds that one can be intimately acquainted with experiences through the practice of mindfulness while at the same time recommending that one should not in any way identify with or appropriate those experiences as one’s own (Anālayo 2003). Miri Albahari (2006) construes the relevant difference here
in terms of a robust sense of selfhood, which, she argues, is illusory, and a more minimal perspectival subjectivity, which, she maintains, is a constitutive property of phenomenal consciousness. Thus, there is the possibility of both pathological and attentionally refined forms of experience that challenge the idea that what experiences all share by way of being had by a subject is that they are experienced by that subject as *mine* in the robust sense. Therefore, if we are to salvage the notion of phenomenal ownership as a way of characterizing the subject’s relation to its experiences, then such cases will need to be taken into account. As we will see, Zahavi has a compelling response to this challenge.

To explain his response, it will help to have a more formal presentation of the argument against phenomenal mineness:

**AM1.** It is possible for subjects to experience thoughts and memories as if they are not their own.

**AM2.** If it is possible for subjects to experience thoughts and memories as if they are not their own, then ownership cannot be a constitutive feature of subjectivity.

**AM-C.** Ownership cannot be a constitutive feature of subjectivity.

First, it’s important to note that even if this argument is sound, it is not an argument against the claim that we are often and for the most part acquainted with our own experiences by way of their seeming to be ours in the strong sense outlined above. In our ordinary dealings we tend to take a very strong position of ownership over our feelings and thoughts. When people say or do things we do not like, we are often outraged because they are not respecting *our* thoughts and feelings where *our* is a very robust form of ownership. Nonetheless, even if there is mineness often and for the most part, if (AM) is sound, then mineneness cannot function as a minimal or essential constitutive feature of subjectivity.

One might respond to this argument by denying that organisms in pathological or attentionally refined conditions — where the robust phenomenal ownership relation does not obtain between subjects and their experiences — are subjects. Specifically, one might claim that when subjectivity breaks down in the above-mentioned ways, we can no longer speak of subjectivity even though some phenomenality remains. However, if this view were right, then it would fly directly in the face of the Nagelian considerations that I began with in chapter 1. Namely, that it is in virtue of an organism
having an embodied perspective on the world, that it experiences that world subjectively from a first-
personal point of view. If the Nagelian view I have argued for in the last section is correct, then such
pathological states would still seem to count as embodying a phenomenal subjectivity in virtue of their
having a unified perspectival access to the world. Therefore, such views as would deny subjectivity to
organisms on the basis of pathological and attentionally refined cases seem too strong. Thus, the
proponent of phenomenal mineness being a constitutive feature of subjectivity needs a different
strategy for arguing against (AM).

Zahavi’s response to this argument is to deny the inference to (AM-C) on the grounds of
equivocation in the use of the term ‘ownership’ in the antecedent and consequent of (AM2). Zahavi
(2005; Zahavi and Kriegel 2015) argues that there are two different ways in which experiences can be
said to be owned by a subject. Subjects can be said to lack ownership of their states insofar as they
lack an explicit recognition of their being the ‘agent or author’ of those experiences. This robust sense
of mineness is lacking in those special kinds of experiences, both pathological and attentionally
refined, where experiences do not seem to be the mental property of their subjects. Thus, this sense of
mineness is operative in the antecedent of (AM2). However, there is a more primitive sense of
ownership as well. Even in pathological and attentionally refined cases of non-ownership, such
experiences, “...cannot lack minimal ownership altogether, since the afflicted subject is aware that it is
she herself rather than somebody else who is experiencing them” (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015, 10). If
one is speaking of ownership in this more minimal sense in the consequent of (AM2), then there is
equivocation because that is not the sense being deployed in the antecedent. If, on the other hand, one
maintains a more robust definition of ownership in order to preserve the consistency of the conditional
in (AM2), then (AM-C) follows, but not in the sense that the objector wishes to press. Either (AM) fails

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32 See also, Campbell (1999).

33 See also Zahavi (2005), Gallagher and Zahavi (2012).
because of equivocation and the objection to (ZM) fails, or it is consistent to hold that (AM) is sound and to claim that minimal ownership is a constitutive feature of subjectivity.\textsuperscript{34}

A little more terminological book keeping is in order here. If we read ‘phenomenal ownership’ in the more minimal sense, then its sole purpose is to home in on an invariant feature that all experiences share in virtue of their being experiences at all. This is what Zahavi means when he talks of mineness in terms of first-personal givenness. What remains in pathological and attentionally refined cases of non-ownership is that foreign experiences, of whatever sort, are still happening to perspectival subjects who have first-personal access to the contents of those experiences and no others. Acquaintance with experience remains in the absence of an explicit sense of authorship and agency. The presence of one form of ownership the absence of the other is at least part of what makes such experiences strange or uncomfortable for those who have them. Thus, when you strip away this more substantive notion of possession and authorship, something important to our ordinary experience is lost. As I said before, it is plausible that we often and for the most part relate to our experiences by taking ourselves to own them in the stronger sense. In order to keep these two notions of ownership clear, I will qualify my usage of ‘mineness’ and ‘phenomenal ownership’ with ‘minimal’ or ‘substantial’ as required.\textsuperscript{35}

2.1.5 Subjectivity as For-me-ness

I will now shift my analysis to another way that philosophers have discussed subjective character, one that is co-extensive with minimal phenomenal ownership. Some philosophers who agree with this

\textsuperscript{34} There is a risk of construing the minimal conception of ownership with knowing that one is having an experience. If one were to go that far, then animals will not have minimal ownership. It is highly plausible that animals possess minimal ownership. Therefore, it is better to talk about the presence-to-mind of experience, which enables knowledge in organisms like us who are capable of it.

\textsuperscript{35} The distinction between minimal and substantial ownership still implies a kind of duality between subject and experience. It is possible that this kind of implied duality is impossible to fully overcome without ignoring subjectivity altogether. That is, if we were to confine our analysis of phenomenal character merely to the way in which qualitative character is manifest while ignoring what it is manifest to, then we might avoid this tacit dualism. However, to do so would be to throw away the baby with the bath water. Thus, we shall have to take care to analyze this feature of phenomenality carefully without reifying it into a subject or self that is problematically distinct from the flow of experience in which it lives.
approach regarding subjectivity being constituted by acquaintance with, or minimal ownership of, one’s experience have chosen a different way to describe the nature of this relation. Specifically, subjectivity is defined in terms of experiences being for me; the subjective character of experience can be explained in terms of for-me-ness. This approach is adopted by Kriegel (2009) and more recently by Zahavi (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015).36

2.1.5.1 Self-Representationalism about Subjective Character

Kriegel agrees with Zahavi that subjects enjoy an especially intimate relation with their own experiences and that this relation accounts for subjective character. While Kriegel and Zahavi are at times at odds over what to call it (mineness, for-me-ness), they seem to be in agreement that for-me-ness is the proper way to characterize subjectivity (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015). However, there is a substantial question about how to characterize the kind of intimate relationship we have with our own experiences. Thus far, I have spoken of this relation only in terms of acquaintance. However, there are at least three different ways of characterizing this relation. One way is that for-me-ness is the result of token perceptual states representing themselves in the right way (Kriegel 2009). Additionally, there is also what Kriegel calls ‘the intrinsic glow view’ (Kriegel 2009; Zahavi 2005; Husserl 1928/2008). Lastly there are acquaintance views of subjectivity (Hellie 2007). Intrinsic glow and acquaintance views are non-representational accounts of subjectivity. Being a (self-)representationalist, Kriegel argues against both of these non-representational ways of explaining for-me-ness.

Kriegel attributes the intrinsic glow view of for-me-ness to Husserl (1928/2008), but Zahavi (2005, 2006) is a more recent proponent of the view. This view claims that the special relation subjects have to their own experiences is unlike any other relation in the world, it is sui generis. Therefore, on the intrinsic glow view, the relation a subject has to its experiences is primitive and cannot be analyzed in terms of other relations. Kriegel thinks that if we are related to our experiences, then the relation

36 In Subjectivity and Selfhood, Zahavi qualifies his analysis of subjective character by describing experiences as being for me (cf. 2005: 45). However, he doesn’t turn this qualification into a neologistic noun for the constitutive property of subjective character (i.e. for-me-ness). Nevertheless, this language has been popularized in its contemporary usage mostly because of Zahavi’s work on Husserl.
must be some kind of awareness-of relation. If there is an awareness-of relation, then there is intentionality. Since there is intentionality, there is no reason to think that the relation is anything other than a representational one (Kriegel 2009, 103-4).

Another view is the acquaintance view, which models the relation of a subject to its own experiences on Russell’s distinction between knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance (Russell 1912/1999; Hellie 2007). The acquaintance view says that perceptual acquaintance is a better model for the relation that a subject has to its experiences. The acquaintance relation is the superior model because there is a degree of immediacy and intimacy embodied in this relation that representational accounts seem unable to address. This inability stems from the fact that representations are often non-veridical. A representation is a token mental state, usually conceived of as having either a propositional or imagistic form, that purports to tell us something about how the world is. A representation can be veridical or not. The world will correspond to the content of a representation, thus making it veridical, or it won’t, thus making it non-veridical.

The relation a subject has to its own experiences does not seem to be representational in this way. It is true that we can mis-represent our experiences in all kinds of ways. For example, it might seem to me that everything is fine and I might tell you so in a very angry way, believing whole-heartily that nothing is the matter even though I am obviously quite agitated. While dreaming, I represent myself as being in a real world (rather than a dreamed or imagined one). However, in spite of such possibilities, there is a sense in which one’s experiences are immune from being mis-represented insofar as these experiences all happen to or for me, from a first-personal point of view, in a way that they don’t happen for you. Even though I am sleeping while representing myself as present in an actual world within the dream, the content of that self-representation is still for-me in a way that it is not for you. Specifically, even though my dream experience is non-veridical — in virtue of its representing me as being awake — that does not change the fact that it seems to me as if I am awake and that there is something it is like for the content of my dream state to seem this way to me.
Galen Strawson puts this point in terms of knowledge, where in virtue of having an experience, the subject knows what it is like to have it in a way analogous to the way subjects endure pain: “The having is the knowing” (2015, 11). It might be the case that what my experience tells me about the world is non-veridical, but that does not mean that it doesn’t seem to me that the world is a certain way. Experiences transpire for me in a mode of first-personal givenness that entails that I am the only one who has access to the contents of these experiences. Because experiences have a first-personal mode of givenness, some philosophers have tried to theorize about this relation in terms of a Neo-Russellian model of acquaintance (Hellie 2007). This way of approaching this relation is ummysterious as it models itself on certain ways of thinking about perception (pace the intrinsic glow view) but is also sufficiently primitive to avoid problems that come with the self-representational account.

Kriegel’s response to these accounts is two-fold. First, he provides an account of self-representation designed to assuage the phenomenological worry that a representational approach to the mind is not equipped to adequately account for the intimacy with which subjects are related to their own experiences. According to Kriegel, it is not just that for-me-ness is to be accounted for in terms of token mental states representing themselves; it’s that token mental states necessarily, non-derivatively, specifically, and essentially represent themselves (Kriegel 2009). In brief, a representation necessarily represents itself in the sense that it is not possible for it not to represent itself. Such a state non-derivatively represents itself by doing so without the aid of any interpretation by any subject, including the subject whose state it is. Self-representation is specific in the sense that the state represents itself as a particular state rather than as something generic. A self-representing state represents itself essentially just in case that in so doing it represents itself as itself and not just accidentally. Kriegel explains this point about essential representation in terms of a distinction between epistemic contingency and necessity. In saying that my father’s sister’s second eldest nephew is struggling to articulate a philosophical point, I am representing myself accidentally, or under an epistemically contingent mode of presentation. In saying that I am struggling to articulate myself, I self-represent essentially, in an epistemically necessary way. Kriegel’s claim then is that our token
mental states can represent in these different ways, and those token states that self-represent essentially serve as the representational vehicles of the subjective character of experience. Obviously, more could be said here, but this is enough to explain Kriegel’s view that his account of self-representation can address the intimacy concerns of intrinsic glow and acquaintance theorists.

Second, Kriegel thinks that if the phenomenological concerns about intimacy can be assuaged by his account of self-representation, then the representational view is to be preferred because intrinsic glow and acquaintance views of subjective character are less plausible candidates for psycho-physical reduction. Both of these non-representational approaches posit primitive epistemic relations that cannot be further analyzed into physical or functional relations. Since, on Kriegel’s view, reductive explanation is the best form of explanation, he is skeptical of both of these analyses of for-me-ness.

Here is a reconstruction of his argument:

**SR1.** Reductive explanations of the special relation subjects have to their own experiences are to be preferred over non-reductive explanations.

This first premise is a kind of methodological presupposition borne of the conviction that *ceteris paribus*, we should desire simpler and more straightforward explanations of phenomena — especially mental kinds — than otherwise. Physical and functional explanations do not make use of phenomenal concepts and therefore meet such preferences.

**SR2.** Acquaintance and Intrinsic Glow views posit epistemically primitive accounts of how we are related to our own experiences.

These accounts are epistemically primitive in the sense that the relation posited by them cannot be reductively analyzed into other sorts of relations that are straightforwardly physical or functional.

The third premise fleshes out the contrast between Kriegel’s view and those he criticizes. Specifically:

**SR3.** Self-representationalism is not an epistemically primitive account of how we are related to our own experiences.
Representations can be physically explained. This is usually done in terms of some appropriate co-variation relation between neurophysiological activity and the sensory properties of objects. However, in the case of trying to explain subjective character, reductive representational analysis must be carried out in terms of a token state representing itself.

**SR-C.** Self-representationalism is a preferred means of explaining how we are related to our own experiences.

There are two difficulties with this argument. The first concerns (SR1) and the second concerns (SR3).

Concerning (SR1), this premise is, to an extent, question begging when applied to consciousness. The problem of consciousness is precisely that all things are not equal with respect to it, at least epistemically, if not metaphysically. We should not build in metaphysical commitments to the kinds of explanations we prefer before exploring the phenomenon under investigation, thoroughly, and on its own terms. If a non-physical explanation better suits the nature of the phenomenon, then this is the explanation we should prefer. Kriegel reasons from an absolute conviction that not only are physical explanations to be preferred but that such explanations are the only option. Any view that does not lead in that direction is to be abandoned. Those convictions speak against the *ceteris paribus* condition embodied in (SR1). Therefore, it’s not obvious that the reductive respectability of representation is left intact. This leads to the second more substantial difficulty.

Consider again Kriegel’s main claim in favor of self-representation over other kinds of relations we might have to our experiences (SR3):

**SR3.** Self-representationalism is not an epistemically primitive account of how we are related to our own experiences.

This is of course an advantage for the view if one endorses (SR1) and can come up with a truly reductive analysis of representation. As I have already said, I think that (SR1) is methodologically problematic. Additionally, there are compelling reasons to think that the reductive ambitions foreshadowed in (SR3) cannot explain subjectivity.
Joseph Levine (2006) has pressed this point with considerable force to the point of acquiescence from Kriegel (2015). In essence, the objection is that the reductive advantage of self-representation over its competitors is actually an explanatory weakness. The objection can be put in the form of a question the self-representationalist has a difficult time answering: why would more representations make any explanatory headway on reductively solving the problem of consciousness? The reason the self-representationalist has a difficult time answering this question is that self-representation looks to be merely self-related rather than genuinely significance conferring.

2.1.5.2 On the Nature of Phenomenal Significance

At this point I need to explain what I mean by phenomenal significance. In doing so we will leave our specific treatment of Kriegel aside for a while and then return to it once I have fully developed this point. Such a digression is necessary for two reasons. First, once I fully explain this idea of phenomenal significance, it will become clear that self-representational accounts of subjective character fail. Secondly, I will rely heavily on this idea of phenomenal significance in the remainder of this chapter as well as the next chapter when I develop my positive view.

When I talk of ‘significance’ and the conferring of significance by an experience to a subject, I have two purposes in mind. First, ‘significance’ is a term that I wish to use in order to analyse the ‘for’ in ‘for-me-ness’. For-me-ness is a property that experiences have for the subjects living through them. Experiences are for me because the world that experiences represent shows up in experience in a particular way. Namely, the qualitative character of our experience presents the world to us as being determinate and substantive (MPQ) (Levine 2001). Another way of putting this is to say that an experience presents the world first-personally in a way that is present to or for a subject who is having that experience.

There is an important contrast between experiences merely being present to or in us and being significant for us (Levine 2006, 194). Since Levine is an internalist about qualitative characters, for him the contrast amounts to a distinction between a mental state being merely present within the system and its being significant for the system because that state is in an acquaintance relation with
the subject whose state it is. In Zahavi’s (2005) language, the token experience is available to the subject from the subject’s perspective first-personally. There are all kinds of token mental states that are present in the system but are not phenomenally conscious. What it is to be phenomenally conscious is for experiences to be given in a first-personal way to the subject having them. So the language of significance is here meant to further elaborate on what it means for experiences to be given to the subject having them first-personally.

Taking seriously this distinction between states being present in the organism and their being phenomenally significant for the organism—both as a criticism of self-representationalism about subjective character as well as a possible candidate for providing an analysis of what ‘for’-ness amounts to when we talk about subjective character in terms of for-me-ness—does not mean we have to commit to representationalism about the mind. One might be a direct realist about perceptual experience and still maintain the contrast and its explanatory upshots. In speaking this way about the presence of experiences and their significance to an organism I am endorsing Levine’s criticism but putting the point more neutrally than he does. Thus, on a more metaphysically neutral construal we can say that there is a difference between an object or content being merely in or before a subject and there being a phenomenally conscious experience that is significant for a subject. Regardless of what view you take, an experience purports to disclose some sub-section of the world first-personally and in such a way that it is not just that there are sensory properties that are disclosed to a subject or represented by a subject, but also that the experience is for a subject.

The second purpose I mentioned above is to develop further this idea of experiences conferring significance to their subjects in order to lay the groundwork for my analysis of subjectivity in terms of affect in the next chapter. Stated baldly, consciousness is important to us. The fact that we have it, live through it, is existentially significant to us. Suppose I were to tell you that by undergoing a surgical procedure we could perfect the representational capacities of your sensory systems so that every

37 The self-representationalist might stamp their foot and say that self-representation is what produces first-personal giveness, but still admit that we do not know how. But this is to give up the ghost on explaining subjective character.
subsequent representation you had would be veridical. The only catch is that after the procedure, you would lose all phenomenal consciousness. There will be nothing it is like for you to live through your perceptions, but they will be entirely accurate (Siewert 1997). You would of course reject the offer in horror. Why? Because your experiences matter to you. Indeed, I submit that your conscious experiences are the most important aspects of your mental life. Without them nothing would matter to you; you would simply be a zombie.38 Recall my analysis from the first chapter. There I made the Nagelian point about subjectivity being at least partially constituted by the organization of an organism’s sensory apparatus. This apparatus is not inert, but sensitive in that it is interested in and poised with respect to its environment in such as way that its various experiences hedonically perturb it. Thus, an organism’s experiences are significant for it by affecting it.39

2.1.5.3 Against Self-Representationalism about Subjective Character

We are now in a position to return to our criticism of Kriegel. If you try to explain for-me-ness in a way that leaves out that which it is posited to explain (the conferring of phenomenal significance), then you have missed the explanandum in search of a reductive explanans. The self-representational theorist has no answer to the question of why non-conscious self-representations would lack for-me-ness, but conscious ones have it. Kriegel (2015, 67) cites Levine helpfully: “Subjectivity...is that feature of a mental state by virtue of which it is of significance for the subject; not merely something happening within her, but ‘for her’.” (Levine 2006, 194). The ability of an experience to confer significance to its subject is what phenomenally conscious experiences have that their unconscious counterparts do not.

We need something to fill the gap between substantial ownership or mineness, which, on the one hand, claims too much, and the mere occurrence of a token state representing itself, which doesn’t claim enough. The self-representational account leaves out a proper analysis of the ‘for’ in ‘for-me-ness’, reducing it merely to a representation of an occurrent token state. The philosophically

38 Strawson (2015) goes one step further and says that conscious awareness is the most important phenomenon in the universe.

39 I will have more occasion to speak of this point in more detail in the following chapter.
interesting sense of for-me-ness is a relation that a conscious subject has to its own experience, such that the experience being present for the subject is significant in some way to the subject. Once self-representationalism abandons any pretense to metaphysical reduction, it seems no more or less preferable to its competitors. Indeed, there is a sense in which the simplicity of the other views over Kriegel’s self-representationalism looks more elegant and straightforward.

Regardless of what version of the for-me-ness account of subjectivity one prefers, they all share a certain feature that should be kept in mind as we go forward. Galen Strawson (2015) calls this feature ‘self-intimation’. Whichever view of for-me-ness one chooses, one is committed to the view that subjectivity can be explained by a special property had by conscious experiences, namely, that they are aware of themselves in addition to whatever content they represent. Self-representation, acquaintance, and intrinsic glow views all offer different accounts of what this self-intimating relation a token state bears to itself amounts to. It is in virtue of each state being aware of itself in one of these ways that there is something it is like for a subject to be in that state. It is a further question whether this self-awareness relation that states bear to themselves is sufficient to explain subjective character or whether a subject is also required.

It is worth noting that Kriegel’s account of subjectivity brings us full circle back to where I began my discussion at the beginning of this section. Specifically, Kriegel and Levine seem to agree that we should characterize subjectivity in terms of its having a quality of for-me-ness. However, these views are also importantly different. When Levine uses the term to explain subjectivity he is talking about the way in which qualitative characters are present. He is focusing on the fact that the world shows up as seeming a certain way to and for a subject. When Kriegel uses the term, he is talking about a special kind of awareness that we have of our own token states. Now, insofar as both Levine and Kriegel are internalists about qualitative character, they think qualitative characters are properties of token mental states. Thus, metaphysically, both authors share the same view, namely that subjectivity is constituted by an awareness of our own states. But the properties that ground that awareness are different in each case.
Nevertheless, for Kriegel, for-me-ness is a different property from that of qualitative character. This is partially because Kriegel is reductive about qualitative characters and thinks there is nothing more to them than representations of the sensory properties of the objects of perception. However, Levine’s and Kriegel’s views about for-me-ness are different at the level of experience itself. For Levine, qualitative characters correspond to sensory properties in the world in a one-to-one relation. Thus, the presence of qualitative characters for me refers to the presence of a qualitative world. For Levine, subjective character is to be explained by the qualitative presence of the world. For Kriegel, things are somewhat different. On Kriegel’s view, we have a special awareness of our own states qua states. Our mental states are phenomenally self-intimating (Strawson 2015). At the level of our experience, we are perceptually aware of the world with all of its qualitative characters and simultaneously aware of our experience of the world. So, the views differ in their commitment to precisely what kinds of properties of mental states account for the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience.

2.2 Moving Forward on the Question of Subjective Character

Having considered a number of different approaches to subjective character in the contemporary philosophical literature, I will take stock of the various views I have canvassed and discuss the similarities and differences between them. This will provide a basis for my positive proposal, namely, that extant accounts of subjectivity neglect the fact that the subjective character of phenomenal consciousness is at least partially constituted by the organism’s point of view. By focusing our analysis of subjectivity on the embodied perspective of the organism, we can start to make good on explicating an important explanandum often neglected by subjectivity theorists, namely, an analysis of the subject of experience.

The following is a list of positive claims about the nature of subjective character that emerge from the foregoing considerations:

MPQ. Mode of Presentation of Qualia - Subjective character is to be explained in terms of the substantive and determinate mode of presentation of qualitative characters.
Recall that there are two levels of description at which to read this claim, one metaphysical, one phenomenological. Metaphysically, Levine explains qualitative characters as being the properties of token mental states. However, phenomenologically, qualitative characters tell us something about how the world appears (e.g., my perceptual experience of the apple is reddish because the apple appears red). Thus, on this view, subjective character is to be explained by the role it plays in determining why and how qualitative characters are manifest in the particular way that they are to the subject of experience. That particular way consists in the fact that the phenomenal concepts we use to represent qualitative characters are: i) substantive, i.e. when we think about qualitative characters with them, the qualitative characters themselves are present to us, and ii) determinate, i.e. our experience acquaints us with specific qualitative characters that can be defined by us with phenomenal concepts without any necessary reference to properties outside of the qualitative character that is present to us, including physical and functional properties.

Another important approach to analyzing the subjective character of phenomenal consciousness is the following:

**SO. The Subject and Object of Experience are Co-Present** - Subjective character is to be explained by the dual intentional structure of token perceptual states. Phenomenally conscious perceptual states simultaneously disclose, from a first-personal perspective, objects in the world and the subject who is perceiving the world by having the perceptual state.

The novel contribution of this view is that it tries to explain the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience in terms of a subject of experience being present in the phenomenal character of any given experience. The theory falls short by not giving us an analysis of what the subject is. I will return to this point below.

Another important view — though, one that does not bear directly on the question of what constitutes subjective character — is the substantial phenomenal ownership view:

**SPO. Substantial Phenomenal Ownership** - Subjective character is to be explained by the fact that subjects of experience own their experiences in some way.
Despite the previous argument against substantial phenomenal ownership — the one that claimed that thought insertion and other possibilities of non-ownership constitute an objection to the view that (SPO) is a constitutive feature of subjective character (AM) — it is important to include an analysis of substantial phenomenal ownership in any philosophical account of subjectivity. This is because it is a feature that typically figures in our experience and is absent only in rare cases. It’s also important to note that Zahavi (2005; Zahavi and Kriegel 2015) makes an important distinction between a substantial and minimal form of mineness. The former can be absent in cases like thought insertion; the latter cannot.

This minimal form of phenomenal ownership is constitutive of subjective character. For the sake of clarity, I have elected to talk about minimal ownership in terms of for-me-ness.

**FM. For-me-ness** - Subjective character is to be explained in terms of the particular way in which experiences themselves are present for me.

This view has two versions; one in which the subject of experience features as a relata and one in which it does not. For example, (SO) could be construed as an example of the first species, whereas views that explain (FM) in terms of token perceptual states being self-aware in an appropriate way would be an example of the second species (e.g. Kriegel 2009; Strawson 2015). The choice one will have to make with respect to different versions of (FM) depends on one’s view of the nature of the subject of experience. If one thinks that there is no subject of experience apart from the arising and passing away of token mental states, then one will have to opt for the state-self-awareness version of (FM). If one thinks that there are subjects of experience, then the subject can obviously be one of the relata in the for-me-ness relation. However, this second option obviously requires more philosophical work.

I will opt for the second view in what follows. My reasons for this are the following. Levine’s (2006) objection to Kriegel (2009; 2015) about the inability of self-representationalism to fully account for subjectivity seems to generalize. A mental state’s being self-related can’t explain subjectivity. This is because an explanation of the nature of subjectivity must account for the conferring of significance of experience to a subject. That is, a subject is that which apprehends a world
such that there is something it is like to apprehend a world as seeming a certain way, i.e. as having a qualitative character. It is in virtue of there being something it is like for a subject to apprehend the qualitative world that the latter is significant to the former. Significance refers to the first-personal manner in which experiences are for the subjects who live through them. If one wishes to explain away the subject, then one will need to provide an account of the self-relatedness of mental states that makes good on the significance conferring relation. Doing so is difficult for two reasons. First, as we have seen, it is very easy to miss the explanandum by positing a self-representational relation that does not meet the significance constraint. By contrast, positing the appropriate mode of self-relation in a way that does not problematically stipulate a definitional identity between self-relation and significance conferring will require an analysis of the subject of experience (whether reductive or not). Such an analysis is required because it is the presence of experience as significant that is the explanandum of subjective character and we need to understand significance in terms of for whom such experiences are significant. Without an analysis of all the relata included in this significance relation, our philosophical understanding remains incomplete.

Finally, it is important to note that these different theses about subjectivity are not equivalent. They propose different points of emphasis in their analyses of subjective character. For example, (MPQ) claims that subjectivity is something to be explained by a particular way that the qualitative world appears. By contrast (FM) claims that subjectivity is a kind of internal relation that subjects have to their own experiences. The (SPO) thesis is a further specification of (FM) and (SO) goes even further to the claim that it is the subject itself that is also present in experience along with the experience’s content.

The difficulty with all these approaches is that they flounder on one of two difficulties: one concerns a problematic assumption that we can explain subjectivity in terms of awareness of something other than the subject. Both (MPQ) and the version of (FM) that accounts for subjective character in terms of self-intimation are problematic in this regard because these views purport to account for subjectivity in terms of a relation a subject has to their experiences, either the qualitative world (MPQ) or their token experiences (FM). The subject is left out of the account, even though it
seems to play a central role as one of the relata that constitutes subjectivity, the other of course being the content of its experiences. Now, it might turn out that there is no subject over and above those experiences, but at this juncture, what is important to note is that some analysis of the subject is required in order to explain the nature of subjectivity, one that is lacking in the accounts canvassed so far. It is the presence of the experience that does the explaining here, not what they are present to. The other difficulty is that other accounts advert to the presence of the subject as being somehow constitutive of subjectivity but then omit any analysis of the subject of experience from the view (SO). A viable account of subjective character will overcome these problems.

### 2.3 Subjective Character and Creatures with Perspectives

The views I have analyzed thus far focus either on how the world appears or on phenomenal goings-on that are internal to the subject. Both are important. When trying to understand consciousness, we should take account of the fact that it grants us access to a world of qualities, and that this phenomenal access to the world is possible only because of the special relationship we have to our experiences. However, it is essential that a connection between these two facets of experience be made and that we conceive of experiences in a way that allows us to take account of the organism’s perspective on the world.

In forging such a connection, we must be careful not to construe subjective character as being too much ‘out there’ and thus missing the explanandum altogether. So also, we must be wary of construing subjective character as being a purely internal phenomenon; something that happens ‘in here’ within some kind of private skull-bound Cartesian theater. Such a view misses the way in which subjectivity offers a first-personal perspective on a meaningful world to an embodied organism. Only by including an analysis of the embodiment of the organism having the experience can we make good on this demand.

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Zahavi (2005) is one exception. He has a fully worked out view of the subject. However, I cannot address his view here as it would require a substantial analysis of the difference between subjectivity and selfhood. I will address these and other issues in chapter 3.
2.3.1 *Embodyment Neglect*

None of the views of subjective character that we have explored in this section are heedful of my proposed connection between subjectivity and the perspective of the organism that has phenomenally conscious experience. In particular, (MPQ) refers only to what the organism’s perspective is directed towards, not its perspective itself. (SO) makes reference to the subject but as it stands, the view doesn’t tell us anything in particular about what a subject is or how that subject embodies a perspective on the world it perceives. Finally, (FM) defines subjective character in terms of an internal relation between a subject and their experience that doesn’t address the issue of perspective. By refocusing the discussion on this connection between the organism’s perspective and the environment on which it has a perspective, both of the aforementioned difficulties can be overcome. By understanding subjective character as an organism’s perspectival relation to its environment, we include the qualitative world without neglecting the subject of experience. The subject of experience is the relatively invariant embodied first-personal perspective of the experience having organism. Therefore, in this section I will return to the argument I made in the first section and combine its conclusions with those of the arguments canvassed in this section. From here I will be able to develop my positive account.

A Neo-Nagelian view of subjectivity that is focused on the perspective of the organism is an important factor in a philosophical account of subjectivity. Such will be the argument of this section. At this point, I have pointed out that in order to provide an account of subjectivity or subjective character, we need to think more carefully about what the subject is. The subjective character of experience is at least partially constituted by the perspective of the organism, not just the content or self-relatedness or reflexivity of its token mental states, but by the embodiment of the organism in virtue of which the world shows up in the way it does for an organism. In this way the embodied first-personal perspective gives us a positive characterization of the subject of experience without reifying it into a metaphysically problematic self or homuncularizing the inner life of that subject.

Recall that in §1.1 of the first chapter, I made an argument based on a close reading of Nagel (1974) to the effect that there is a constitutive connection between the subjective character of
phenomenally conscious experience and the point of view of the organism. Here is that argument
again:

**HB1.** Humans and bats have different kinds of perceptual systems.

**HB2.** The nature and function of a perceptual system constitutes an organism’s point of view on the world.

**HB-C1.** Humans and bats have different points of view on the world.

**HB3.** If two species of organisms have points of view on the world, then any token perceptual states enjoyed by those organisms, however similar their contents, will differ in their phenomenal characters.

**HB-C2.** Any token perceptual states enjoyed by organisms of different species, however similar in their contents, will differ in their phenomenal character.

I now want to expand on this argument by linking the conception of a point of view to the embodiment of the organism. This connection between perspective and embodiment is already tacitly contained in (HB2), namely, that on account of an organism having the kind of evolved sensory apparatus it does, that organism enjoys a certain kind of phenomenal character.

We know from our consideration of Zahavi’s (2005) argument (ZM) that there is an aspect of experience that obtains over and above the way the organism’s changing states contribute to its overall phenomenal character. Recall, that the final conclusion of that argument was the following:

**ZM-C2.** Each conscious perceptual state shares something with the others that goes beyond their differing qualitative intentional contents, namely, the subject’s acquaintance relation to them.

Recall also that Zahavi proposes that what various token phenomenal states share is a minimal kind of ownership by a subject for whom they are present. Such token states are for me (FM). However, this is not the entire story.

My preferred terminology for assessing the connection between an organism’s perspective and its changing experiences is to say that it is in virtue of there being a phenomenal kind of ‘creature
consciousness’, that a token state might be said to be phenomenally conscious at all. I use the notion of ‘creature consciousness’ to refer to two important features that are necessary for any account of subjective character. The first is that creature consciousness is a general aspect of phenomenal character that is type-identified by the sort of organism which is having it. Different sorts of creatures enjoy different sorts of creature consciousness on account of the fact that the perspectival structure of their experience is constituted by the type of sensory apparatus they deploy in their perceptual commerce with the world (HB2). Thus, I use the notion of creature consciousness to refer to the fact that there is a contribution made to the phenomenal character of an organism’s experience by the organization of that organism’s perceptual perspective on the world, a perspective that is constituted by the evolved configuration of its sensory apparatus.

The second feature of subjective character that ‘creature consciousness’ refers to is that the arising and passing away of token perceptual states takes place against a phenomenal background. One of the things we need to understand and explain about consciousness is the fact that we are conscious while the contents of our conscious experiences vary and change. In virtue of what can it be

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41 This distinction between ‘creature’ and ‘state’ consciousness is at the heart of some slightly orthogonal discussions in the philosophy of mind. One way this distinction is used is to make distinctions in the fineness of grain of our explanations of conscious states. For example, an organism can be said to be creature conscious if it is awake rather than asleep (Chalmers 2010; Searle 2000). Another way that this notion of ‘creature consciousness’ is used is to refer to the fact that when attributing consciousness to organisms, we can do so in an intransitive way. That is, in asking whether or not the ladybug is conscious, answering that question tells us nothing about whether the ladybug is conscious of anything in particular. Of course, an organism’s token states can be said to be transitively conscious in virtue of their having content that purports to represent some part of the world as being thus and so. Call such states, ‘state conscious’ (Kriegel 2009). By contrast, the organism having that state can also be said to be conscious full-stop regardless of the content of their experiences (Bayne 2007). This is the second way philosophers use ‘creature consciousness’. The distinction is also used as a way of thinking about what degree of detail neural explanations need to have in order to count as having provided some explanation of the mental states they physically realize. Thus, if there is a neural correlate of wakefulness, we could rightfully attribute to such a pattern of neural activation that it was sufficient for creature consciousness, that the organism is conscious at all. But this would not yet explain the patterns of neural activation necessary to account for the precise contents of a given state that the organism would be in on account of its being awake and in perceptual commerce with its environment. Thus, it is often thought that creature consciousness refers to an abstract structural feature of consciousness, while state consciousness refers to the rich and detailed contents of experience.

42 This usage is close to Bayne’s usage in that in saying that an organism is creature conscious I am making a claim about the organism as a whole and not the content of any of its token mental states. It is different from Bayne’s usage in that, following Nagel, being creature conscious makes a contribution to the phenomenal character of the organism’s experience. As far as I can tell, Bayne is agnostic on this latter point.
said that all of my individual phenomenally conscious experiences are phenomenally conscious? Whether I am smelling freshly baked bread, scratching my toe or listening to good ol’ Ludwig Van, I am conscious in a way that cuts across the specific contents of these experiences. This generality of consciousness across specific contents is not just the fact that I am awake rather than sleeping (cf. Chalmers 2010, ch. 3). There is something it is like to be conscious in these various ways. These varieties give me epistemic access to different aspects of the world (sights, sounds, smells, etc), but all of them seem to participate in a general kind of consciousness that I call ‘creature consciousness’. What our token perceptual states share is that they are all had by an organism with a unified, embodied first-personal perspective on the world.

My way of talking about creature consciousness is closely related to discussions of consciousness in terms of a field structure within which token states are transient modulations. Talk of a phenomenal field is helpful as long as it does not neglect the organism’s embodied perspective by overemphasizing the phenomenal field’s overlap with the visual field (Searle 2000; Thompson 2007). Additionally, one might think that this field is to be accounted for in terms of some internal Cartesian theater of experience and that the phenomenal changes that happen as a result of changing perceptions, thoughts, and images all happen inside the organism, presumably somewhere in the brain, like actors moving on and off the stage. Such a view would commit us to a problematically internalist version of self-intimation and I have been trying to articulate a view of subjective character that goes beyond a necessary commitment to views that try to explain subjective character exhaustively in terms of self-intimation.

2.3.2 The Argument for the Embodied Perspectival View of Subjective Character

I am now in a position to state my positive argument for the constitutive connection that exists between the subjective character of phenomenal consciousness and the embodied perspective of the organism. The first premise takes us back to my reconstruction of Nagel’s view on consciousness:
**MA1/HB-C2.** Having a point of view or first-personal perspective makes a phenomenal difference to the experiences had by an organism.

As one’s perceptual states arise and pass away one is given all kinds of varying information about one’s environment. Further, one experiences that information in terms of a world of vivid qualities that are apprehended in experience. Yet, there is a contribution to one’s overall phenomenal character made by the fact that all of one’s token experiences are had from a first-personal perspective. This perspective provides a structural limit on how the world seems. The world would be visually very different if our eyes were in our knee-caps rather than the front of our faces. The evolved configuration of our sensory apparatus makes a contribution to what it is like to perceive the world regardless of what the world might be like when we perceive it.

Our sensory apparatus remains relatively stable across our varying experiences (barring injury or malfunction). This invariance of form creates a stable perspectival locus that remains constant across our varying experiences. Thus:

**MA2.** An organism’s embodied perspective on the environment remains invariant across its changing states.

It is important to note that the structure of the organism’s embodied perspective need not be unchanging. Invariance is a by-product of a meta-stable structure. After all, there are all kinds of changes that we undergo as subjects due to developments in our capacity to integrate sensorimotor information as we develop. There are also atypical experiences like dissociation and out-of-body experiences that affect the structure of our embodied perspective. The point is not that we do not change, but that there is a kind of meta-stable invariance around which the changes are organized.

The third premise comes from my consideration of Zahavi’s argument for an invariant feature of phenomenal character. Namely:

**MA3/ZM-C2.** The phenomenal character of token perceptual states shares something that contributes positively to the phenomenal character of the subject’s experience but is not exhausted by the differing qualitative characters embodied in those states. Namely, all these token states have a subjective character.
As we have seen, different philosophers want to give different accounts of what subjective character amounts to. My view is that subjective character is to be accounted for in terms of the perspective of the organism. I will have more to say about this below.

I now want to combine all three of these premises into a conjunctive antecedent condition for a conditional whose consequent should follow as a conclusion immediately. Here is the conditional:

**MA4.** If MA1, MA2, and MA3 are true, then an organism’s embodied perspective plays a constitutive role in explaining the subjective character of that organism’s experience.

Why think that the consequent follows from the antecedent? We are trying to articulate what it is that phenomenal states share over and above their differing qualitative characters. In virtue of what can we say that a token state is phenomenally conscious given that there are other tokens with completely different qualitative characters? What do they share? The straightforward answer that falls out of my parsing of Nagel is that they all happen to an organism with an invariant embodied first-personal perspective. The organism’s perspective plays the role of telling us what these token states all share. Therefore,

**MA-C1.** An organism’s embodied perspective at least partially constitutes the subjective character of that organism’s experience.

There is perhaps a triviality concern here that needs to be addressed. We can frame this concern in terms of the following questions: Who would object to this conclusion? Isn’t it obviously true that an organism’s embodied perspective is in some way constitutive of its phenomenal character? I think the answer is yes, and perhaps others do too, but if (MA-C1) is obviously true, it hasn’t really shown up in the philosophical analyses of consciousness that have sprung up in response to Nagel (1974). Indeed, most of the views we have canvassed in the last section make scarcely any mention of it all.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{43}\) Dan Zahavi’s (2005) view is an exception here.
At this point I need to differentiate my approach from some of the views I canvassed in the last section. Specifically, I want to make sure that my notion of an organism’s perspective is not explained in terms of the presence of qualia or the organism’s purported awareness of its own token mental states. In order to do this, I need to introduce two new premises:

**MA5.** The presence of qualia is not sufficient to explain subjective character.

In the last section I gave some important reasons for thinking this premise is true. In particular, for those who try to analyze subjectivity just in terms of the way qualia appear, one is using subjectivity to account for qualitative character, but this does not tell us enough about subjective character itself (cf. MPQ). The more important premise at this juncture is this one:

**MA6.** Awareness of one’s mental states is not sufficient to explain subjective character.

Views that focus only on subjective character being constituted by the organism’s awareness of its own states (FM) or on the presence of the subject in experience (SO) face serious problems. Namely, they do not give any place to the organism’s perspective. Subjective character becomes an internal relation that token mental states have to themselves (FM) or an unanalyzed homunculus (SO). Each of these neglects the way in which the organism’s evolved perceptual system and embodied organization relate the organism to its environment in a way that has an immediate upshot in the organism’s experience. This is why (MA-C1) needs to be stated explicitly and is not a trivial truth about phenomenal character. Additionally, by embracing the embodied perspectival conception of subjective character, we can make good on the positive aspects of both (FM) and (SO) by giving an account of how we are aware of our experiences and how the subject is present in experience.44

I now combine the last two premises as well as (MA-C1) into a three-fold conjunct that will serve as the antecedent of a conditional that will yield my second conclusion, effectively differentiating

44 I will return to this point below when I consider some important objections.
my approach from those that rely on analyzing subjective character in terms of the organism’s awareness of its own token mental states:

\textbf{MA7}. If MA-C1, MA5, and MA6 are true, then an organism’s embodied perspective plays a constitutive role in explaining an organism’s subjective character regardless of how the qualitative world appears and whether or not that organism has an awareness of its states.

The embodied perspective of the organism is something that is left out by analyses of phenomenal character that focus only on the idiosyncratic way that qualia show up in experience and those that home in on the awareness that some subjects may have of their own token states. The organism’s perspective is that in virtue of which it is related to its world of qualities regardless of the way in which it might be reflexively acquainted with its own mental states.

Therefore, it seems safe to derive the consequent of the conditional in (MA7) as the final conclusion to the argument. Namely:

\textbf{MA-C2}. An organism’s embodied perspective plays a constitutive role in explaining an organism’s subjective character whether or not that organism has an awareness of its states.

To be clear, I am not hostile to the notion that a subject’s being aware of their token mental states might play a central role in explaining subjective character. Indeed, it might even be partially constitutive in some way, perhaps as a reliable epistemic means for allowing a subject of experience to become self-acquainted. The point I am making is that this cannot be the whole story.

\textbf{2.4 Two Important Objections}

I have been articulating a view that accounts for the subject of experience in terms of an organism’s embodied perspective on the world. In this section, I will consider two important objections that will help me to further substantiate the view.

In a recent paper by Marie Guillot (2016), a similar set of distinctions is made between different ways that philosophers have approached the question of subjectivity. Guillot differentiates between three different views: For-me-ness, Me-ness and Mineness. These notions line up pretty
directly with the distinctions I made earlier in §§2.1 and 2.2. For-me-ness straightforwardly falls under (FM) and refers to the fact that subjects are acquainted with their own experiences in a special way. Me-ness refers to the idea that a subject is aware of herself as a subject in having a phenomenally conscious experience (SO). Mineness corresponds directly to (SPO).45

According to Guillot, philosophers who are interested in subjective character tend to conflate the three notions outlined above. This is especially the case when it comes to for-me-ness and me-ness. Guillot argues for a strong distinction between these two aspects of subjective character. Her explanation of that distinction can be summarized by the following two claims:

i. One can be phenomenally aware of one’s experiences without being aware of oneself as the subject of those experiences and,

ii. The first relation is more fundamental than the second.

I will argue against both claims. Guillot’s most forceful argument in favor of (i) and (ii) is a consideration of patients with Cotard’s syndrome. This is a disorder where patients report that they feel as if they are no longer present as selves or subjects of experience. Such depersonalization disorders can regress to the point that subjects no longer feel as if they exist at all.

Here are some representative reports from patients who suffer from this unfortunate disease (cited by Guillot 2016, 19): “I imagine myself seeing life as if it were played like a film in a cinema. But in that case where am I? Who is watching the film?” (Simeon and Abigel 2006, 15). In addition to the subject seeming to be absent where they were once present, subjects also report that they feel as if they are no longer alive: “It almost feels like I have died, but no one has thought to tell me. So, I’m left living in a shell that I don’t recognize anymore” (Sierra 2009, 27). According to Guillot, these types of reports suggest that these patients, “…lack a phenomenal awareness of the presence of their own selves”

45 I have already discussed phenomenal ownership at sufficient length and my analysis agrees with Guillot’s. Guillot and I, however, disagree about the proper way to understand for-me-ness (FM) and me-ness (SO). It is to this dispute that I now turn.
(Guillot 2016, 20). If it’s the case that some patients can lack a phenomenal awareness of themselves as the subjects of their experiences, then (SO) cannot be true, as (SO) claims that it is a constitutive feature of phenomenally conscious experience that both a subject of experience as well as some subsection of the world is present in experience. So much for the argument in favor of (i).

In addition, Guillot claims that in Cotard cases, “…something of the subjective character of abnormal experiences does seem to be retained. Those experiences are ‘for’ the subjects undergoing them, given to them in a special way…” (ibid). The reasoning in favor of (ii) would then go like this. If the for-me-ness relation (FM) can obtain in the absence of a subject having a phenomenal awareness of itself (SO), then the for-me-ness relation is a more fundamental constituent of subjective character.

My response to the argument in favor of (i) is to deny that Guillot and I are talking about the same kind of subject of experience. Guillot seems to be talking about what Benj Hellie (2012) calls a ‘soul-pellet’. That is, a kind of internal homunculus that one introspects by turning one’s gaze inwards. Cotard patients report the absence of such homunculi; therefore, there is no subject present that is constitutive of phenomenally conscious experience. I would make a distinction between the soul-pellet conception of the subject or me-ness and the embodied perspective conception of the subject. Cotard patients do not lack this latter constituent. In spite of their reports to the effect that they are experiencing the world as if there was no self present, they are nevertheless experiencing the world from an embodied first-personal perspective. If Cotard patients still have embodied perspectival subjectivity, then there is a sense in which they do not lack me-ness in having their particular sort of experience. Therefore, the objection does not go through.

Herein also lies my response to Guillot’s argument in favor of (ii). It is only in virtue of living through and occupying an embodied first-person perspective that one comes to have a special relation to one’s own experiences (FM). The idea that for-me-ness is a more fundamental constituent of subjective character than me-ness is reliant upon a soul-pellet conception of the subject, one that can be either present or absent to the introspective gaze. By denying this conception in favor of the embodied perspectival conception, it is possible to maintain the view that the presence of a subject is
constitutive of subjective character (SO). Further, maintaining this view also allows me to claim that the obtaining of the (FM) relation is itself dependent upon the existence of an embodied first-person perspective. This latter claim is true because it is in virtue of us having access to the world from a limited perspective — one constituted by the evolved configuration of our sensory apparatus — that we come to have a special kind of relation to our experiences, the sort that lets us report, in a unique way, on the contents of our experiences.

Before moving on to the conclusion, I want to entertain one more objection. I have been trying to distinguish my approach to subjectivity from those approaches that claim subjective character is exhausted by the organism’s awareness of its own states. I have done so by arguing that there is a coherent notion of subjectivity that we can make sense of, one that has its roots in Nagel’s influential treatment of consciousness, that can be true regardless of whether subjects are aware of their own mental states. The reason I have sought to make this distinction between the embodied perspectival approach and the self-intimation approach is because many views that take the self-intimation road often talk about this recursive relation in terms of a subject’s phenomenal awareness of their own token mental states or indeed of a token mental state’s awareness of itself. However, there is a way in which we might think of a subject being acquainted with its experiences that does not involve an inward turn, nor an awareness of token mental states. This view would instead conceive of the subject’s awareness of its experience as a kind of attitude whereby its immediate experiential relation to the world was understood as experience itself. Experiences on this view are not in the head but are activities of consciousness (e.g. perception, imagination, memory, thought) that relate the embodied subject to the world (cf. Thompson 2007). One might argue that this view could be a species of the self-intimation view and that such a view would still endorse a strong embodiment component to its analysis of subjectivity. If that’s right, then the strong distinction I have been arguing for between self-intimation and embodied perspective would collapse.

I concede this objection, but I don’t think it costs me anything. I take my approach to be friendly to such a view. I have no objection to conceiving of a subject’s relation to their experience in this way. Such an approach makes good on my commitment to conceiving of experiences in terms of
perspectival relations between organisms and their environments but still retains the idea that we are acquainted with our experience and that this constitutes subjective character. This view also has the potential to fill out the missing pieces of the (SO) view by analyzing the presence of the subject of experience in terms of the embodied perspective of the organism. My only worry is that when we start to talk of subjectivity in terms of awareness of states whose contents represent the world as being a certain way, or in terms of a subject being present in experience, we lose track of a more basic perspectival organization of the organism. Phenomenal character is tied to a point of view, namely a finite, embodied point of a view that an organism has on its world. As long as this point is kept in mind, I see no reason to deny the centrality of for-me-ness to subjectivity.

**Conclusion**

I began with an analysis of some recent contributions from philosophers regarding the subjective character of experience. I then combined those insights with my preferred reading of Thomas Nagel's (1974) influential work on consciousness from chapter 1 to offer my own view of the subjective character of experience. In constructing my argument, I have tried to emphasize the role that having an embodied perspective on the world plays in there being something it is like for an organism to be conscious. Thus, these first two chapters constitute an extended argument for the first two premises of the master argument; namely, that (I) subjectivity is constitutive of phenomenal character and (II) the embodied perspective of the organism is constitutive of subjectivity. In the chapters that follow I will develop this analysis of subjective character by examining the nature of the relation that the subject has to the world in virtue of living through an embodied first-personal perspective on it. In particular, I will emphasize the role that bodily affect plays in structuring our phenomenal perspective.
3

The Affectively Embodied Perspective of the Subject

Our whole cubic capacity is sensibly alive; and each morsel of it contributes its pulsations of feeling, dim or sharp, pleasant, painful, or dubious, to that sense of personality that everyone of us unfailingly carries with [them].

William James from The Principles of Psychology Vol. II, p. 451

Introduction

In this chapter I develop the view I have been arguing for in the first two chapters. I call it the ‘embodied perspectival view’ of subjective character:

**EP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious states is at least partially constituted by the organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

In this chapter I will consider an important criticism of the embodied perspectival view as it currently stands. Responding to this criticism will allow me to improve upon the embodied perspectival view in substantial ways. In particular, I will argue that the embodied perspective of an organism is always, in some way, affective. I call this the ‘affectively embodied perspectival view’ of subjective character:

**AEP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious states is at least partially constituted by the affectively responsive organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

The subjectivity of phenomenal consciousness is at least partially constituted by embodied affect, that is, by our ability to feel what is happening on and inside our living bodies. More specifically, our phenomenal sense of being a perspectival subject is generated, in the first instance, by those processes and bodily feelings of self-regulation whereby we persist and survive. Thus, the (AEP) and my
arguments for it constitute a defense of the third premise of the master argument, that affect is constitutive of an organism’s embodied perspective.\footnote{I restrict my claim about the centrality of body sensation to the phenomenal character of human and animal mental states in order to avoid getting entangled with the modal intuitions of Cartesian philosophers who think that there might be cognitive beings without bodies or philosophical zombies who are physically and functionally identical to us but lack consciousness. I am ambivalent about the extent to which modal intuitions can give us insight into conceptual truths about natural kinds. Thus, my claim is not to argue for some constitutive connection between bodily affect and any possible conscious mental state, where ‘possibility’ refers to metaphysical possibility as determined by conceivability (Chalmers 1996). Rather, my goal is to show that there is a specific form of bodily affect that has been neglected by philosophers, and that by taking this form of affect into account in our thinking about phenomenal consciousness, we can understand the most primitive and widespread way in which consciousness is instantiated in the natural world by humans and other animals. Affect is constitutive of phenomenal character in this more limited sense. That being said, in chapter 8, I will offer some reasons to think that arguments for dualism based on the conceivability of zombies are unsuccessful.}

In §3.1 I consider an objection to (EP) to the effect that (EP) offers a merely geometrical constraint on the nature of subjective character. This objection will motivate (AEP). In the following section (§3.2), I develop a positive argument for (AEP) that adequately deals with the aforementioned objection. The remaining sections consider important objections to (AEP) itself. In §3.3, I consider the possibility that bodily affect contributes only to the qualitative character of phenomenally conscious experiences and not to their subjective character. I then argue (in §3.4) against the view that we are only aware of bodily affect by attending to it. Lastly, in §3.5, I consider the connection between affect and agency in the constitution of subjective character.

**3.1 Geometry, Subjectivity and the Centrality of Affect**

To begin, I explain the objection to (EP) from geometry. I then lay out some necessary conceptual preliminaries regarding the nature of affect as well as some important data from affective neuroscience. These preliminary exegetical and empirical details will allow me to formulate a first pass at a positive articulation of (AEP). This first-pass will also constitute a response to the objection against (EP) from geometry.
3.1.1  *The Objection from Geometry*

Recall that in chapter 2, I considered an objection against self-representational theories of subjective character (Kriegel 2009; 2015; Levine 2006). The objection stated that an information processing system’s representing the presence of a mental state within itself was not sufficient to explain the significance of the qualitative character represented in that state to the subject experiencing it (Levine 2004; 2006). Call this ‘The Significance Constraint’ for explanations of subjective character. In order to explain subjective character, we must explain how and why it is that the qualitative character of a phenomenally conscious experience is given to a subject of experience in a distinctively first-personal way. Experiences do not merely occur in subjects; they happen to them; they are significant for them.

We are now in a position to consider the objection to (EP) from the geometrical structure of experience. Call this the Argument from Geometry (G). The first premise is just a statement of the significance constraint for explaining subjective character:

**G1.** Any *viable* theory of subjective character must meet the significance constraint. It must explain the way in which qualitative character is given first personally to or for a subject of experience.

The second premise is a restrictive claim about the explanatory scope of (EP). In particular,

**G2.** The embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of the subjective character of its phenomenally conscious experiences (Zahavi and Kriegel 2015).

The motivation for accepting (G2) is the following. If we take the embodied perspectival view to just be the view that subjective character is constituted by the physical organization of the organism’s sensory apparatus, then the organism’s embodied perspective is providing us with only a geometrical constraint on subjective character. By ‘geometrical’ here, I mean that the world appears to the organism the way it does because of the physical location of the body and the distribution of its sensory apparatus across the surface of the body. For example, the visual field would appear far differently to us if our eyes were located in our knees rather than side by side in the front of our faces.
However, if (G2) is true, then (EP) is in trouble. This is because:

**G3.** A theory of subjective character that explains only the geometrical structure of experience does not meet the significance constraint for explanations of subjective character.

The reason (G3) is true is similar to the reason that self-representationalism failed to provide an adequate account of subjective character. Self-representationalism fails because an internal and recursive relation between an organism and its occurent mental states is not enough to explain why the content represented by those states is phenomenally significant to the subject having them. The phenomenal presence of the qualitative world is important for the organism. This significance can likewise not be explained by the fact that the world is presented to the organism in a particular way because of the geometrical organization of the organism’s sensory apparatus. If it could, then a video camera would count as having an experiential perspective. The first-personal givenness of the qualitative world being present to and for the organism remains unexplained but this is our central explanandum. In this chapter I will argue that we must explain this mode of presentation in terms of a kind of affective-existential significance that animates the lived body of the organism and relates it to its environment.

In the absence of such an explanation, (EP) is not sufficient to explain subjective character. Therefore, the conclusion follows. Namely:

**G-C.** The embodied perspective of the organism is not sufficient to generate a viable theory of subjective character.

How might one respond to such an argument? Does this mean that we should jettison the insights accrued in the first two chapters in favor of some kind of mysterianism? I think not. I reject (G2) by showing that one can take an embodied perspective view of subjective character without failing to meet the significance constraint. I will do this by showing that the embodied perspective of the organism is affective in nature and that affective states meet the significance constraint, albeit in a way that is different from how other philosophers who are interested in subjective character have tended to explain phenomenal significance.
3.1.2  The Varieties of Affect

In order to understand the relation between affect and the embodied perspectival view of subjective character, I must first begin with some definitions. 'Affect' is a general category of the mental that refers to different types of states or events whereby an organism is perturbed by its environment in a way that is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral for it. I understand this general notion of affect as a "...lack of indifference...a sensibility or interest for one’s existence" (Colombetti 2014; 1). Affect is a kind of capacity or sensitivity in virtue of which an organism has a hedonic relation — a relation that is essentially graded along a spectrum of pleasant, neutral, and unpleasant feelings — to its environment.

As embodied subjects of experience, we are not simply observers of the world, but participants in it. We are both agents and patients as we are bombarded by sensory stimuli and then respond to it in kind with our sensorimotor, attentional, and cognitive agential capacities. We deploy our various forms of agency in response to affective primes provided by our environment and felt in our bodies. These primes solicit our responses. Our various capacities for agency enable those responses.

A bodily affect is any felt occurrence within the framework of the body. Such feelings are significant to the subject because they are valenced. This notion of ‘valence’ is complicated. It refers to the fact that affective events are felt as instantiating a kind of value that is felt and understood by the subject in terms of a positive/negative spectrum (Colombetti 2005; Prinz 2010). For example, actions can be morally valenced by being either praiseworthy or blameworthy. More relevantly, bodily feelings are hedonically valenced by being either pleasant or unpleasant. There are also neutral bodily sensations, so it is important to understand that the hedonic valence of any affective event —arising within the framework of the body — does so within a spectrum that is not exclusively bivalent.47

In spite of my specific focus on hedonic affect arising within the framework of the body, there are still many different sorts of affect that are relevant to the question of how the subjective character

47 Unless otherwise specified, whenever I use the term ‘valence’, I am referring to the hedonic value of affective mental events, especially those that arise within the framework of the body.
of experience might be constitutively affective. Specifically, it is important to distinguish between three different types of affect: sensory, emotional, and homeostatic (Panksepp 1998, 2005, 2011). Philosophers have had much to say about the sensory and emotional aspects of mental life. However, homeostatic affect—or, as I will call it, for reasons to be explained shortly, 'homeodynamic affect' (Damasio 1999; 139; Rose 1998) - has been largely neglected in philosophy of mind, including the philosophy of emotion.48

Homeodynamic affect is physically realized by regulatory processes through which an organism maintains an internal equilibrium in the face of a changing and often hostile environment.49 The term most commonly used to describe these basic life-regulation processes is 'homeostasis'. 'Homeostasis' is the process of self-regulation by which an organism maintains a balance of physiological factors such as temperature, pH, and nutrient levels in its internal milieu (Craig 2003b). Such self-maintenance is necessary to keep the organism primed for dealing with possible interruptions to that balance from without (Damasio and Carvalho 2013; 145).

A note on the differences between these two terms 'homeostatic' and 'homeodynamic' is in order. They refer to the same process. How might two suffixes with seemingly opposite meanings come to specify the same process? The term 'homeostasis' emphasizes the fact that an organism survives by aiming for a kind of steady-state that allows it to persist in the face of an unstable world. The organism withstands the onslaught of environmental perturbances by maintaining a balance. This balance is what the 'stasis' in 'homeostasis' refers to. This process of self-regulation is also 'homeodynamic' because perturbations born of self-world contact are constant. Perfect balance is asymptotic. There are always minor fluctuations in the internal milieu of the organism. Persistence is achieved when those

48 Exceptions to this tendency include Thompson (2007), Ratcliffe (2008) and Colombetti (2014).

49 I use the locution 'physically realized' as a metaphysically agnostic catch-all for the relation of the physical to the mental. I assume this relation is causal in some respect. The precise semantic values of these realization terms is an important topic in its own right. However, I leave such a project to the side as it is not my intention to solve the hard problem of consciousness in this chapter (Chalmers 1996). Though, I will say something about it in the final chapter. Even so, I try to couch my view in a way that is acceptable to functionalists or dualists. Nevertheless, in the interest of transparency, I confess that my theoretical inclinations are non-reductive in nature.
fluctuations occur within a permissible range of excitation; organismic stability is really meta-stability. The organism is not aiming at a steady state but at preservation of dynamic flexibility that keeps it robust across a variety of self-world interactions. Therefore, I use the term 'homeodynamic' to refer to this most basic level of bodily affect. It is a more accurate description of the regulatory micro-dynamics that facilitate function and persistence in the organism.\footnote{50}

Homeodynamic affects are experienced as feelings that occur in and on the body, in both a holistic and local way. A local bodily sensation is one occurring in a determinate location in and on the body. An example would be the parched sensation in your throat when you are thirsty or the grumbling feeling in your stomach when you are hungry. Further examples of the feeling component of homeodynamic affect besides thirst include the need for air, sexual arousal, the need to expend waste from the body through defecation and urination, as well as general visceral and muscular feedback in the body (Denton 2006, Denton et al. 2009; 501). While most of these bodily affects tend to be local — arising in and on a specific region of the body — there are also holistic bodily affects. A holistic bodily sensation is one that animates larger sections of the body in a more diffuse way. An example from William James’ discussion of attention is the subtle cascades of arousal that animate the trunk and limbs of the body during experiences of fatigue (see James 1890/1950: 404). Another way to get a sense of such feelings is to think about the way the body shows up in absorbed skillful activity such as running or playing the drums. In these situations, the body is present in experience in a more global way.\footnote{51}

\footnote{50} Homeodynamic processes are not just present in complex organisms. Such processes are proper to the functioning of all living cells (Cook et al. 2014). Organic systems strive for equilibrium in the face of perturbances at every level of organization in the tree of life. Insofar as homeodynamic affects are experienced by organisms like us, such feelings provide a window on phylogenetically basic processes of biological persistence. Thus, it is plausible to think that such forms of experience exist in many other sorts of creatures besides ourselves. Here is not the place to speculate on how far down the phylogenetic tree phenomenality extends. For now, I focus on how such self-regulation processes ramify through human experience.

\footnote{51} I will have occasion to speak of these sorts of examples in more detail in §3.3 in response to an important objection to the view I am developing here.
As I mentioned above, such feelings, whether global or local, are 'valenced', meaning that they are felt by the subject as having a hedonic tone that ranges across a spectrum from pleasant to neutral to unpleasant (Colombetti 2005, Prinz 2010). Local bodily sensations tend to be more explicitly valenced, as when I feel pain in my stubbed toe or an itch on my lower back. Holistic bodily sensations tend to be more neutral in their valence, as when I am just about to fall asleep and I can feel my whole body. That being said, holistic bodily sensations can be more explicitly valenced as well. If my band and I are performing well together, then my holistic bodily feelings are hedonically positive while I am playing the drums. If I am nervous and the sound isn't good, then my body feels tense and uncomfortable. That being said, it is vital to remember that there are neutral bodily sensations, which I claim are being felt constantly whether or not there is a localized and obvious sensation arising in some specific region of the body. I claim that all of the preceding local homeodynamic feelings represent departures of various kinds from a more general feeling that arises when the organism is in homodynamic equilibrium. This more general feeling has been referred to as 'the feeling of being alive' (Thompson 2007). The feeling of being alive, in particular, is the one that I think is central to the subjective character of phenomenal consciousness in humans and other animals.

In mammals, the process of homeodynamic life regulation is carried out by the interoceptive system; a network of nerves that converge in the lamina I of the dorsal horn in the spine and innervate the entire living body (Craig 2002, 2003a). This point regarding innervation is important because it provides a physiological basis in virtue of which the baseline feeling of being alive, or homeodynamic equilibrium, is realized by the interoceptive system. Since the nerves of this system innervate the entire living body, we have some reason to believe that homeodynamic feelings are also so distributed. Not all feelings are like this. The feeling of thirst for example is local, it occurs in the throat area. However, the feeling of being alive is a whole-body phenomenon.

3.1.3 A First-Pass at a Positive Characterization of Affective Subjectivity

When discussing consciousness, philosophers have tended to concentrate on sensory aspects of experience, neglecting homeodynamic affect. Lists of such sensory aspects of experience tend to include sights, scents, tastes, and sounds, but also pains. For example, anger tends to have a negative
hedonic valence, while the taste of a food that I enjoy seems to have a positive hedonic valence (Aydede 2014). Sensory affects can be generally classed as those that are experienced via exteroceptive information channels, though not exclusively. Certainly, information channels such as vision and audition are uncontroversially composed of sensory receptors that deliver information about the world outside of the organism. Although pain is also often counted as a sensory affect (Panksepp and Biven 2012: 90), it is a case of interoception, not exteroception. Interoception is a process whose function is to map the body’s condition. Other examples besides pain include visceral and muscular tension. The reason why interoception in some cases also counts as a sensory affect is that like the uncontroversial exteroceptive sensory affects, it has a felt hedonic tone and is associated with occurent sensation.\textsuperscript{52} It is worth noting that many of these examples would qualify as examples of the qualitative character of a phenomenally conscious experience. However, as I will show in what follows, homeodynamic affects within the body should be thought of as contributing to the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience as well.

In addition to sensory and homeodynamic affects, there are emotional affects, the feelings that accompany emotional episodes. There is some debate in the philosophical literature about how to explain them and emotions more generally. One point of general agreement is that emotions comprise at least two components, appraisal and valence. An appraisal is the part of an emotion that evaluates the significance of an emotionally salient event for the subject. The valence is the feel or hedonic component that makes the emotion positive or negative in some way. Emotion theorists do not agree about which of these components is more important for explaining emotions, or indeed whether the distinction itself is a straightforward one. Some emotion theorists tend to identify emotions with a kind of cognitive appraisal, focusing on the contribution that emotions make to rationality in perception (De Sousa 1990) and cognition (Nussbaum 2001). Others focus more on the affective valence component as the essential feature (James 1890/1950, Damasio 1999, Prinz 2006). Both

\textsuperscript{52} In what follows, I will show that recent neuroscientific theory suggests that interoception is not an example of sensory affect but of homeodynamic affect. Nevertheless, the thought that pain, and bodily sensation more generally, count as sensory affect is fairly widespread. I will return to this point below.
groups of theorists can agree that there is something felt during an emotional episode that helps to individuate the emotion. These theorists disagree about how central such feelings are in their contribution to the rational role that emotions play in our mental lives.

Within the category of emotional affects, there are three relevant sub-categories. First, there are emotions proper. These are the familiar episodic affective episodes that animate our life with so much meaning. Relevant examples that are particular to the human case would include happiness, pride, jealousy, and anger. Moods are another form of affective event that could be rightfully understood as falling under the category of emotional affect. Moods are to be differentiated from emotions proper on account of at least two factors (Prinz 2006). The first is that moods often lack a proper intentional object. Moods permeate our experience in ways that colour our perceptions of the world without necessarily picking out any one aspect of the world as seeming a certain way. On the other hand, emotions tend to have specific intentional objects (usually meaningful events of personal interactions) which occasion them. The other aspect of asymmetry between emotions and moods is their temporal duration. Emotions usually have a fairly circumscribed life. They come and go and do not last very long, often because the proper object of our emotions changes quite rapidly. Thus emotions might last from a few seconds to a few hours. Moods by contrast can last for a much longer period, for days or even weeks depending on a person’s situation. Finally, there are also core emotional affects. These are the raw phylogenetic materials out of which our individual human emotions are built. It is this final sub-species of emotion that I want to explore in some detail.

According to affective neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp (1998, 2005, 2011), there are at least seven 'core emotional affects' that need to be differentiated from more common human emotional

53 Some philosophers think that moods constitute a counterexample to intentionalism in that moods have no intentional object (Searle 2000). However, if one were committed to intentionalism about the mental, one might say that moods represent the world itself as being a certain way. For example, if I am ‘in a bad mood’, then everything I experience might seem gloomy, gray or otherwise lacking in some positive valenced quality on account of my mood. Thus, the extent to which moods constitute an objection to intentionalism will depend on how one explains aboutness and whether or not a token mental state needs to have a specific object-oriented content in order to count as being intentional.
affects. Core emotional affects are primitive, genetically constrained, affective arousal patterns that are tied to habitual, survival-oriented behavioural scripts. By a 'behaviour script' I mean a kind of behavioural response that is habitual and reflex-like. Responses of this sort are activated by the organism feeling core emotional affects. The core affects are SEEKING, FEAR, RAGE, LUST, CARE, PANIC, and PLAY. Core emotional affects are the basic feelings that get worked up into the hedonically felt components of emotions proper through cognitive development over both ontogeny and phylogeny (Panksepp and Biven 2012). Each core emotional affect is realized by a relatively discrete activation pattern in the brainstem and lower midbrain. These patterns find a widespread isomorphism in the sub-cortical neural architecture of a host of different mammals (Panksepp and Biven 2012; 3). These neural signatures are also coupled with recognizable facial responses that are also homologous across different mammalian species. These 'evolutionary gifts' are directly connected to behaviour scripts that are triggered by relevant environmental stimuli. Thus, each one of these core emotional systems reflects a basic coupling of feeling and action (Panksepp 2005; 32). These more primitive emotional affects are connected through a motivational interface with homeodynamic affects. When I feel hungry, my SEEKING system comes online and facilitates the searching behavior that hopefully leads to the sating of my appetite.

In relying on the notion of core emotional affects, I might seem to have committed myself to one side of an entrenched debate in affective neuroscience between two schools of thought about how

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54 I will discuss this point in detail in chapter 5.

55 Panksepp uses capitalized letters to describe these systems in order to differentiate them from our folk psychological usages of these terms.

56 Panksepp emphasizes the phylogenetic component of this development, insofar as he takes core emotional affects to be 'evolutionary gifts' that we have inherited at a species level. However, it is also important to recognize the role that ontogenetic or individual, organism-centered development plays in molding core emotional affects into emotional affects through environmental interactions and cultural variability (see Prinz 2006).

57 There are two different ways to read the claim about how core emotional affects are related to their neurophysiological realizers. Panksepp’s view is that the relation is one of identity. The activation of the relevant brain regions are the emotions. I would make a more cautious claim. The lower midbrain and brainstem causally enable core emotional affects. To take the further step of positing a metaphysical identity is beyond what we can know for certain.

58 There is an important question as to how these two kinds of affect are related. I address this question in chapter 8.
emotions are made. The first school is the ‘natural kind’ view of emotions. Panksepp’s account of core emotional affects is a prominent version of this view. By contrast, there is the so-called ‘psychological construction’ view of emotions. These views claim that there are no phylogenetically basic emotions and that all emotion experience is built up out of domain-general psychological and neurophysiological processes associated with perception, interoception, and memory.

The most developed version of the psychological construction view is the conceptual act theory (Barrett 2014; Barrett et al. 2014; Sapute et al. 2015). This view claims that emotional affects are constituted by the conceptual interpretation of sensory information from the body and the world that integrates current experience by recognizing it in light of memories we have of the past and how those experiences impacted us. Since the acquisition of concepts is a sociocultural process, it is not possible to individuate emotions on the basis of phylogenetically primitive affects. All emotions are constructed by a conceptual act of interpretation which takes as its inputs past and current experience. It is clear that this view could not be more opposed, at least prima facie, to the core emotional affect view I have been discussing. However, there are some important difficulties with the conceptual act theory, which when properly understood, erode the differences between these two approaches to a point that my view can be embraced by both sides of the debate.

First, the conceptual act theory doesn’t have a worked-out theory of what a concept is. To be fair, perhaps no one does. The theory is adverbial in that it emphasizes the act of applying concepts to experience. Thus, we can analyze the merits of the view by looking at the kind of activities concept possession empowers their possessors to do and how this bears on the view’s account of emotions. To begin, note that what ends up counting as a conceptual ability within the conceptual act theory is very different from what philosophers tend to focus on when they’re discussing conceptual capacities. This isn’t necessarily a problem for the conceptual act theorist if they’re willing to bite some bullets. However, I will argue that there is an internal inconsistency in the account that comes to light when we compare the theory of concepts embraced by this view and a more philosophical understanding of concepts.
For the conceptual act theorist, a conceptual act is a context-dependent, embodied process of combining incoming sensory information from the body and world with past experience (Barrett 2014, 293). Contrast this with the plausible philosophical view that whatever concepts might end up being, it is in virtue of having or being able to use one, that an agent can represent an object in a way that is not context-bound. A concept’s relation to an object it purports to represent should allow the concept user to decompose and recombine the concept with other concepts to represent its objects in a way that is generalized and removed from the user’s immediate environmental needs (Evans 1982; Hurley 1997). On this stronger version of what a conceptual ability is, to count as having a concept you must not only be able to categorize experiences, you must also be able to use concepts in conjunction with other concepts in general and plastic ways. Therefore, by the lights of this philosophical view of concepts, the conceptual act of the psychological construction theorist of emotion is not actually conceptual. Rather, it looks more like a proto-conceptual ability that helps agents categorize their experiences according to equivalence classes (Noë 2004). However, in exercising such a basic categorization capacity through integrating present experience with memory of the past, one does not yet have context-independent decompositional abilities that let the concept wielder substitute predicates and subjects interchangeably in forming judgments.

An organism with the proto-conceptual ability to apprehend its environment according to the embodied meaning of its past experience cannot yet make inferences that meet what Gareth Evans calls ‘the generality constraint’ (Evans 1982, 100-5). The generality constraint is a way of accounting for the fact that thoughts about the world have a structure that is flexible. If I am to count as having the thought that <The apple is red> I need to have the concepts whose logical combination constitutes the structure of the proposition expressed by the thought. To count as having those concepts, <apple> and <red>, I need to be able to attribute redness to things besides the apple and to understand properties of the apple besides its redness. My apprehension of the apple when thinking about it with concepts must be grounded in something more than the embodied context of my survival-based need for sustenance or my memory of previous experiences of apples. However, because the conceptual act theorist postulates that their ability to apply the categorized memories to the present experience is
context-dependent, it’s not clear that their account of the proto-conceptual act can meet the generality constraint.

However, this is not necessarily a problem for the conceptual act theorist. Indeed, one might think it a boon. It is plausible that many organisms have this proto-conceptual ability and would thus count as being properly emotional under the conceptual act theory. Under the assumption that many animals experience fear and happiness, for example, if it turns out that we are able to attribute to such organisms a proto-conceptual ability to evaluate perceptual stimuli according to affectively biased and context-dependent equivalence classes, then this would turn out to be a beneficial result for the conceptual act theorist, as their attribution criteria for emotional experience would seem to map our pre-theoretical convictions about the ubiquity of emotions in other animals. Yet, conceptual act theorists deny this claiming that, “…abstract emotion concepts and language, are also required” for an organism to count as having an emotion (Barrett 2014, 293; Sapute et al. 2015). Thus, the view has two problems. The first is that it seems hopelessly anthropocentric in denying emotions to any organisms below the threshold of complex language abilities; on this view then, it seems that apes and humans are the only emotion-having beings. Second, its positive view of what a conceptual act is seems inconsistent with its negative constraint on language-usage. That is, it seems entirely plausible that many organisms have the ability to use memory to integrate present sensory information from the body and world to negotiate their affordance landscapes according to the affective needs of their embodied situation. To add to that capacity a necessary condition that the organisms also be language users seems unmotivated. Therefore, this theory does not make clear whether conceptual activities are lower-level recognitional or abstract, higher-level mental capacities.

Regardless of how this internal ambiguity is resolved for the conceptual act theorist, there is a sense in which the dispute between them and the natural-kind view I have been endorsing is terminological. The conceptual act theorist acknowledges that the construction process is one that operates on several basic constituents. One of these basic psychological processes is core affect (Barrett et al. 2014, 89). These approaches might easily be reconciled with each other by situating the natural kind view as providing an account of core affect and the construction view as accounting for the various
ways core affect is taken up into the system by memory, perception, and inference to generate emotional perceptions of the world that carry subject-relative semantic content.

At the same time, the construction view offers an important corrective for certain problematic tendencies in Panksepp's version of the natural kind approach. In particular, Panksepp has a tendency to type-identify core emotional affects with modular areas of brain activation. By the light of a constructionist approach we might instead individuate core affective tone as a dynamical pattern of coordinated activity among embodied feeling, subcortical brain activation, facial expression, and behavioural priming in response to paradigm scenarios (de Sousa 1990). This is the view I favor.

As should be clear from these considerations, affective neuroscience has a lot to offer philosophers who are interested in the nature of phenomenal consciousness. By taking the affective neuroscience seriously as a way of engaging more deeply with the biological deep-structure of consciousness, we can start to get more precise about what constitutes our most basic forms of subjectivity.

In summary, I have given a preliminary indication that the affective life of humans is far more varied and omnipresent than is often thought to be the case. Thus, I hypothesize that the subjective character of our experience is not just a disinterested observer for whom experiences are merely occurring. Rather, we are involved as subjects in our experiences in virtue of those experiences hedonically perturbing us in various ways through sensory, emotional and homeodynamic affects.

3.2 The Affectively Embodied Perspectival View of Subjective Character

Now that I have provided some important conceptual and empirical details about the nature of embodied affect, I am in a position to develop a positive argument in favor of (AEP). By doing so, I can furnish the embodied perspectival approach (EP) with enough detail and resources to be able to satisfy the significance constraint for theories of subjective character.

Recall that at the outset of this chapter I provided a statement of the Affectively Embodied Perspectival View of subjective character (AEP). The view claims the following:
**AEP:** The subjective character of an organism’s phenomenally conscious states is at least partially constituted by the *affectively responsive* organization of its embodied perspective on the world.

I will argue for (AEP) by arguing against the objection from geometry (G), the latter being a rejection of the original embodied perspectival view of subjective character (EP). I argue first that (AEP) is true and secondly that (AEP) satisfies the significance constraint.

My response to the objection from geometry (G) is to reject (G2). Recall that this premise states the following:

**G2.** The embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of the subjective character of its phenomenally conscious experiences.

What follows is an argument whose conclusion entails the rejection of (G2) as well as a two-fold positive statement of (AEP).

Each of the two positive statements of (AEP) are embodied in the argument’s first two premises. Namely,

**A1.** The living body is a locus of affective subjectivity.

I will argue for (A1) by further developing some of the claims I made in the last section regarding the affective neuroscience and phenomenology of homeodynamic affect focusing on the feeling of being alive (Thompson 2007). The second premise is the following:

**A2.** The living body *affectively* relates the subject to the world.

I will argue for (A2) by amplifying some of my previous remarks about the ubiquity of affect in ordinary experience as well as by developing an interpretation of some of the empirical literature on affectively biased attention.

If these two premises hold — and I will argue at length that they do in what follows — then we can generate a conditional premise that will entail the conclusion that (G) is unsound. The reason that
(G) is unsound is because (G2) is false. The failure of the objection from geometry (G) also yields a solid positive statement of (AEP). The conditional inference is the following:

**A3.** If the living body is a locus of subjectivity that affectively relates the subject to the world, then it is not the case that the embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of subjective character.

The conclusions that follow from these premises is the (AEP) view:

**A-C.** It is not the case that the embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of subjective character. [pace G2]

In addition, an organism’s embodied perspective also provides an affective (rather than merely geometical) constraint on the subjective character of its experience. This is because the organism’s embodied perspective on the world relates the organism in an affective way to the world and the world to the organism. Further, if it is the case that (AEP) embodies a view of subjective character that goes beyond a merely geometrical constraint on phenomenal character, then being affectively related to the world by having an embodied perspective on it meets the significance constraint for a theory of subjective character. It then follows that (AEP) is a *viable* theory of subjective character. In the following three sub-sections, I will provide arguments for the first two premises and discuss the conditional inference in (A3) and the conclusion. I then use the remainder of the chapter to discuss some important objections to (AEP).

### 3.2.1 The Living Body as a Locus of Affective Subjectivity

In order to effectively argue in favor of (A1) I need to further develop my analysis of homeodynamic affect. In particular, I begin with some phenomenological considerations followed by some conceptual and empirical analyses.

As I explained in the opening section of this chapter, homeodynamic affects are a particular kind of bodily sensation or affect.59 Embodied affect consists in feelings in the body that are

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59 I use ‘sensation’, ‘affect’, and ‘feeling’ interchangeably unless otherwise noted.
experienced, bodily sensations that there is something it is like for an organism to have. Previously I mentioned some examples of what I will call 'local homeodynamic affects', things like muscle tension, hunger, and the example that will preoccupy us moving forward, thirst. These are obvious enough. However, there is also a more general homeodynamic affect that I called 'the feeling of being alive'. This kind of feeling is more difficult to understand.

From a phenomenological point of view, one can home in on the feeling of being alive by doing the following. Press your finger down with some pressure on a flat, hard surface. This exercise is a proxy for any other local bodily sensation you might be feeling for non-constructed reasons such as being told to move your body in a way so as to cause such a sensation to arise. If you use my finger example, your attention will naturally shift to the resistance offered to your finger from the surface. Try to focus your attention on the felt pressure within the part of your finger that is making physical contact with the surface. The pressure will create a specific focus-point of felt affect in that part of your finger. Now shift your attention away from the point of pressure in the finger to the other less focal and intense sensations further up in your finger that are outside the halo of contact between the tip of your finger and the surface against which you are pushing. Such feelings are usually less salient but they are always being tacitly felt in the attentional background of conscious experience.

If you were to follow a course back through your finger up your forearm and then down from your shoulder into your chest cavity, it would be possible for you to feel a whole host of bodily sensations that animate the entirety of your living body. This is not an easy task. Some people have difficulty feeling such sensations. Part of the reason that feelings of homeodynamic equilibrium are particularly easy to miss is that, "In contrast to the many discriminable sensations from the body, the subjective appreciation of visceral sensation [an example of homeodynamic affect,] is more diffuse, less well localized, and usually below perceptive thresholds" (Craig 2002, 664; Craig 2010). If I stub my toe, certainly that local feeling will become salient, but these more general bodily feelings are more

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60 I suspect that this is mostly because our conscious attention has become habitually oriented through our vision and cognition; we tend to focus on what we see and what we think at the expense of how our body feels.
diffuse and usually less focal in our attention and thus, less salient. With some practice, however, one can learn to experience their body as the ever-present pre-reflective background of their perceptual perspective on the world. Your local feeling of pressure (or whatever) emerges out of this affective baseline of bodily sensations.

Consider another example, thirst. You feel a local sensation in your mouth and throat that motivates you to move about your apartment until you find something to drink. Once you start to drink the water, there is a feeling of satiation in the mouth and throat, and perhaps even in the stomach, depending on how empty it is. A cooling cascade of diffuse sensations also animates the rest of the trunk and perhaps even your limbs. Once the feeling of thirst has cleared, there is a background feeling that remains. This is the same type of feeling you felt around the halo of pressure in your finger once you expanded your attention\textsuperscript{61} to experience what was going on in the rest of your hand and maybe arm, namely, a diffuse homeodynamic bodily affect with a relatively neutral hedonic valence. It is the same type of feeling you have when your body is fully engaged in an activity like playing the drums or dancing, the holistic bodily feeling of being alive.

Explicating the phenomenal character of homeodynamic affect, especially the feeling of being alive, can be tricky because this kind of phenomenal consciousness is importantly different from other, more familiar forms like exteroceptive sensing, emoting, and thinking. Recall that phenomenal consciousness has a two-fold structure. It has qualitative character in virtue of which segments of the world seem to have certain qualities like colour, taste, and smell, qualities that there is something it like to behold. Further, phenomenally conscious experiences have a subjective character in virtue of which there is something it is like \textit{for me}, as a subject of experience, to behold the world of qualitative characters from a particular point of view.

\textsuperscript{61}The perceptive reader will note that by helping myself to the language of attention here that I have potentially begged the question. I address this objection in §3.4.
Homeodynamic affects can contribute to the phenomenal character of an experience as qualitative character and as subjective character. When a pain arises, it distresses us and this tends to draw our attention to it. One is aware of the pain as having a location in the body; the pain is an example of qualitative character and thus an intentional object of consciousness. However, the pain is also a change in and of me. When I say, 'Ouch, that hurts!' in response to the arising of the local pain, I am expressing a thought to the effect that something about me, as the subject of the experience, has changed (Soteriou 2013, ch. 3). As I probe the body with my attention in and around the pain, I discover other sensations that are not painful but are just as present. I realize that my entire living body is a kind of organic furnace whose constant interoceptive processing yields a churning mass of such sensations. I use the metaphor of the furnace intentionally. It is meant to denote the fact that the organism is constantly transforming parts of its environment into energy that it then uses to construct and maintain itself in the face of a changing milieu (Thompson 2007). This change in me often consists in a disturbance of my homeodynamic equilibrium, an episodic incursion from without that impacts and alters my holistic affectively neutral feeling of being alive. Holistic bodily feelings are not just physical events on a body that I carry with me as a mental subject; they are also a feature of my subjectivity in virtue of which I am able to intelligently perceive and navigate the world. When local disturbances arise, they are disturbances of this general feeling of equilibrium. In this sense, the

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62 We quite naturally carve up the world in terms of the mind and the body as well as in terms of a perceptual subject and a world of objects. This is part of what we are trying to capture with the notions of the qualitative and subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience. There is nothing wrong with these distinctions, they are helpful and illuminating. However, in the case of homeodynamic affect these distinctions begin to break down. Homeodynamic affect is in this way different from other forms of phenomenal consciousness, such as distal perception. In perceptual cases, the content of the experience does not count as an aspect of me in the same way that a bodily feeling does. Both types of experience have a subjective character and are thus experienced as being for me, but in the case of embodied affect, the feelings in the body can be both a qualitative character of a phenomenally conscious experience, or be a part of the subjective character by contributing to the affected sense of ‘me-ishness’ that partially constitutes phenomenally conscious experience.
holistic feelings that animate the living body and constitute the feeling of being alive are mental and contribute to the subjective character of phenomenally conscious mental states.\textsuperscript{63}

I will now ground these phenomenological reflections in some empirical findings. Our phenomenological baseline of bodily affect is realized by the extended nervous structure of the interoceptive system. Differentiation in the diameter of nerve fibers in the dorsal horn of the spinal cord has allowed neuroscientists to isolate a group of nerve fibres that connect multiple levels of information processing in the brain to the entire body (Craig, 2002; 657). This anatomical arrangement means that the brain has a direct channel through the spine to informational feedback from the entire body. There is a constant cascade of afferent signals coming from this embodied network of nerves into the brain through the dorsal horn of the spine.

These findings bear on discussions of the nature of pain. Pain has often thought to be a sensory affect, but if Craig’s research is correct, then it turns out that pain should be thought of as a homeodynamic affect. This is because the actual path of the nociceptive signals (signals pertaining to pain) is grounded in the aforementioned network. This re-conceptualization of the nature of pain amounts to the idea that what pain signifies is a disequilibrium in homeodynamic interoception.\textsuperscript{64} The more common view is that pain is an affective gloss on exteroceptive signals regarding tissue damage caused by factors external to the organism and thereby signals something about those aspects of the environment, e.g. that the handle is too hot to touch.

Another way to put this point about pains is to think of them as imperatives (Klein 2015). An imperative is a command like ‘Close the door!’ Pains can helpfully be thought of as commands given by the living body. Colin Klein helpfully points out that imperatives do not, “…convey any information

\textsuperscript{63} I say ‘contribute’ here to make room for the fact that there might be other factors besides bodily affect that are involved in the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience. For example, in the human case, cognitive capacities for inference and judgment might bring about a phenomenal sense of being a \textit{thinking} subject and not just an \textit{embodied} and \textit{feeling} subject. I take Kant to have been committed to a view like this.

\textsuperscript{64} This extended network of nerve fibers that innervate the entire body sends afferent signals of many sorts to the brain, pain being only one.
about the reason why [they] want you to close the door, [they don’t] tell you anything about what the world is like (except indirectly), and [their] function is not to inform you” (Klein 2015, 3). Instead, the function of a pain is to let you know that something is wrong with you and that you should fix it by attending to the local area of your body that is signaling to you that homeodynamic equilibrium has been broached in some way (because of excess or deficiency) and that some kind of subsequent action is required. The evaluation of the cause of the pain is secondary to the fact of its immediate recognition. The existence of pain constitutes a reason for the system to stop what it is doing regardless of what the world happens to be like. Once some degree of felt equilibrium has been returned, then the organism will be in a better position to subsequently evaluate its previous behaviour and take possible futures into account in orienting itself towards in light of what it knows about how certain affects feel. But in the first instance, it is the felt departure from homeodynamic equilibrium that provides the first affective notice to the organism that something is amiss.

Let’s scale out from our particular consideration of pain for a moment. When our homeodynamic balance is disturbed by perturbations from the environment, then more particular, episodic, and local homeodynamic affects arise. If there is a rise in the concentration of salt in the bloodstream, the organism experiences thirst. If it has been too long since the last feeding, then it feels hunger. These specific interoceptive affects are felt as departures from the affective baseline of homeodynamic equilibrium. They motivate the organism to correct for the felt excess or deficiency. Part of what gives the feeling of thirst, hunger, or pain its motivating quality is the fact that it lets the organism know that things are out of balance. The organism must then have some sense of what that balance consists in such that departure from it is felt as significant. I propose that the feeling of being alive plays that role. Homeodynamic affect is a holistic felt bodily sense of being alive and this feeling is the basis for our basic sense of being an embodied subject. Without a feeling of homeodynamic equilibrium, there would be a chasm between an unconscious sense of balance and a conscious sense of imbalance that seems hard to cross. Once you have finished drinking your water and the thirst dissipates, does your sense of the body completely disappear? Of course not. It is just that the body is no longer giving you direct and local signals that there is a lack of balance that needs to be corrected
for. Thus, your habit of attention re-orients to the information delivered by its exteroceptive sensory receptors and you go back to whatever worldly engagement you were occupied with before the feeling of thirst arose in the first place.

It is important note that in these kinds of situations, there are multiple forms of affect working together to help guide behaviour. If it has been some time since a viable water source has been available, then the salt concentration in the bloodstream starts to increase. The organism experiences a mild thirst affect and begins to actively seek for water. The feeling of thirst is an instance of felt homeodynamic disequilibrium. This feeling motivates the searching behaviour, what Panksepp calls the “SEEKING” system. The active search for water is a core emotional affect that has a felt component of active alertness, a positive hedonic orientation towards possible sources of satiation and a behavioural component of prodding the local surround in search of water.65

There are further examples of how our capacity to apprehend and integrate sensory information is dependent upon a whole host of affectively charged homeodynamic self-regulation processes. These include respiration (Zelano et al. 2016), heartbeat (Babo-Rebelo et al. 2016), and gastrointestinal functioning (Richter et al. 2016). For example, recent research has shown that natural respiratory function synchronizes with electrical activity in the piriform cortex and limbic areas, including the amygdala and hippocampus (Zelano et al. 2016). It is commonsensical of course that breathing rates are affected by what we do. When we are angry, our breathing becomes shorter and faster, when we are calm, breathing is longer and more relaxed. However, in the aforementioned study, it was shown that the influence goes the other way. As it turns out, the basic homeodynamic function of breathing in and out, in addition to oxygenating the blood and expunging carbon dioxide, directly entrains areas of the brain that undergird perceptual salience (ibid., 12449). In the experiment, 

65 There is a further question here about how my account relates to exteroceptive sensory affects such as scents, flavors, sights and sounds. My view is that homeodynamic and core emotional affects motivate and orient exteroceptive sensory perception. On this proposal, sensory affects are a variegated set of glosses on sensory information that help to further an organism’s homeodynamic equilibrium through engagement with the distal environment. They are guided in this probing of the environment by the felt imperatives of homeodynamic and core emotional affect. I will have more to say about this in the next sub-section (§3.2.2).
subjects were given a visual discrimination task of categorizing emotionally salient faces. When the faces were presented during the inhalation phase of nasal respiration, subjects were much faster and more accurate in discerning the faces (ibid., 12460). Further, in a subsequent memory recall task, subjects were much better at recalling previous images when those images were encoded during inhalation. Such results indicate that inhaling naturally has a pronounced effect on our capacity to discern and remember task-relevant data.

In another study, it has been shown that the phase-amplitude of alpha waves in the anterior insula and occipito-parietal regions of the brain are entrained by gastric basal rhythms (Richter et al. 2016). What this means is that the resting state of the brain is continuously influenced by feedback from the stomach via the vagal nerve and the spine. This influence propagates through subcortical relays and a number of important cortical sites. The latter include the insula, ventral anterior cingulate cortex, and somatosensory cortex (ibid., 1). In this study, participants fixated on a black dot against a grey background. The subjects were instructed to stay still and fixate on the dot and to let their mind wander. Using magneto-encephalography (MEG), the electrical signals created by the brain were measured from the subjects’ scalp. The author’s point out: “The alpha rhythm is known to exert an inhibitory influence on spike-firing rate and has a versatile impact on perception, attention, and memory” (ibid., 7). The alpha rhythms of subjects with a fixation task with no cognitive burden show that the alpha waves of the brain are continuously modulated by the gastric system. Thus we see another example of how homeodynamic processes have a pervasive influence over the neural functions that undergird central cognitive processes like perception, attention, and memory.

A final study that bears on my point here concerned the way our capacity for self-processing in grounded in an entrained synchrony between heartbeats and the default network (Babo-Rebelo et al. 2016). In this study, the experimenters measured heartbeat-evoked response (HERs) using MEG in a thought sampling paradigm. Subjects were instructed to rate the different ways that their spontaneous thoughts were self-related. Following William James (1890/1950) and others (Christoff et al. 2011; Mandrigin and Thompson 2015), the authors differentiate between two kinds of self-related processing: the self as ‘I’ and the self as ‘Me’. The self-as-I is a pre-reflective sense of self which is
grounded in the subject’s capacity to experience the world from a first-personal perspective, what I have been calling ‘subjective character’ or ‘subjectivity’. The self-as-Me represents the capacity of an individual to think about themselves as a self. An example of a thought had by the self-as-I would be something like <I am feeling hungry>. By contrast, an example of a thought had by the self-as-Me would be <I wonder if they like me or if they are just pretending> (Babo-Rebelo et al. 2016, 7834).

In the experiment subjects were asked to fixate upon a point on a screen and to let their thoughts wander until the appearance of another visual stimuli (a halo around the fixation point). At the point of interruption subjects were asked to give a report on the nature of their thoughts at that moment along four different axes of analysis. The first axis was whether the thought was self-related as an ‘I’ in terms of it being about the subject of experience (as acting, feeling, or perceiving). Secondly, they were asked to report on the so-called ‘Me’-scale as well as whether the thought was in the past, present, or future and its emotional intensity. The authors found two different networks of brain-viscera entrainment that undergird the two kinds of self-related processes. In particular, subject-as-I reports were correlated with the ventral precuneus differentially responding to heartbeats and a similar level of response by the ventralmedial prefrontal cortex for the subject-as-Me. As the authors point out, the ventral precuneus is associated with a whole host of cognitive functions associated with the organism’s capacity to experience itself as an embodied subject. These include, episodic memory retrieval, perspective taking, body ownership, self-location, spatial navigation, imagination, future planning, and the feeling of agency (ibid., 7838). Even our capacity to think of ourselves is modulated by processes of homeodynamic self-regulation. These further considerations give strong support for the idea that our living body is a locus of affective subjectivity. That is, our capacity to feel our own bodies is constitutive of our basic sense of being a subject (Craig 2010; Christoff et al. 2011).

66 Note that this distinction is operating at the level of kinds of thoughts. Our capacity to think of ourselves in different ways is distinct from the different ways in which we experience our bodies as objects or subjects (Christoff et al. 2011; Mandrigin and Thompson 2015).
In this sub-section I have provided some reasons for endorsing the first premise of my argument for (AEP). This premise states:

**A1.** The living body is a locus of affective subjectivity.

I have argued for this premise in two ways. First, I have claimed that we have good phenomenological reasons for thinking that there is a global, diffuse kind of bodily affect that contributes to the subjective character of our experience. I called this unique form of homeodynamic affect, ‘the feeling of being alive’ (Thompson 2007), and I claimed that that sort of diffuse and holistic bodily affect is the dynamic baseline out of which more local and obvious bodily affects emerge. I have also shown that there is good reason to believe that our basic capacity for homeodynamic self-regulation exerts a modulating influence over a host of cognitive functions associated with consciousness.

Because of its physiologically basic nature, I suggest that once homeodynamic life regulation processes become affective, they are felt as a primitive sense of being an embodied subject, what I have been calling the ‘the feeling of being alive’ (Thompson 2007). This feeling is grounded in the interoceptive system, a network of nerves that innervate the entire living body. Likewise, this feeling of being alive is a holistic and diffuse bodily feeling which undergirds more episodic and local homeodynamic affects like thirst and hunger.

This argument is not without its difficulties. Therefore, in §3.3 I will consider an important objection to (A1) to the effect that any phenomenal upshot that might be tied to homeodynamic self-regulation will be tied constitutively to the qualitative character of phenomenally conscious experience rather than to its subjective character, as I have argued here. For now, though, I will move on to a consideration of reasons for endorsing (A2).
3.2.2 The Affective Relation of the Embodied Subject to its Meaningful World

Affect is not just a private raw feel. When we are affected, we are affected by a meaningful world and we are thereby related to that world affectively (Ratcliffe 2008). Thus, the second premise of the argument for (AEP) that I will consider in this subsection is:

**A2.** The living body affectively relates the subject to the world.

When we have affective experiences, a meaningful relationship between the self and the world is established. Each of the different types of affects has a tendency to emphasize the self-world affective relation in different ways. Getting clear about this kind of emphasis structure in our various forms of affect will serve as an initial motivator for endorsing (A2).

I begin with another phenomenological example. I have a strong attachment to chocolate chip cookies. I enjoy them enormously. Let’s imagine that I am now encountering a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. My visual perception and tasting of the cookies recruits a whole host of affects that were enumerated previously (see §3.1.2). They include sensory affects, emotional affects (of various sorts), and homeodynamic affects. Consider the sensory affect associated with my perception of the cookies. The cookies seem delicious to me when I see, smell, and taste them because I experience pleasure when I have eaten them in the past, and this past experience conditions my perception of them in the present. In this way, the affect is oriented primarily towards the cookies in that it is the cookies that look delicious. I experience their deliciousness when I taste them, to be sure, but the dynamic of sensory affect is decidedly world-centred in its structure.

Contrast this with emotional affects. This species of affect is more complicated because it has so many sub-species (core emotional affects, emotions proper, moods). Nevertheless, an important feature of all emotional affects is that there is a kind of mutual emphasis between self and world, at least more so than in sensory affects. For example, emotions tend to be organized around how the world or someone in it makes me feel. This is part of what makes emotions such an important part of our rational life (De Sousa 1990), they help organize our attention around what matters.
Finally, there are homeodynamic affects. These kinds of affects, while responsive to the world’s solicitations and punishments tend to emphasize the subject. For example, as Colin Klein (2015) points out, the content of my pain is often uninformative about the cause of the pain but informative about what I should do to the pained part of my body to relieve that pain. When I am hungry or thirsty, I don’t care where the solution to the problem comes from, I care about making myself better by getting myself back into a state of homeodynamic equilibrium. In this way, such affects are subject centred.

In spite of these general differences in phenomenal emphasis on self or world or a meaningful balance between them, all of these forms of affect relate the subject to a meaningful world in some way. This basic affective relation between an organism and its environment is not an occasional modification of an otherwise non-affective stream of conscious experiences. Our experience is always affective in different ways (sensory, emotional, homeodynamic). Specifically, in addition to episodic and obvious emotional affects like anger and fear that arise and pass in response to relevant stimuli, we live through a pervasively affective baseline of bodily feeling. Psychologists of emotion and affective neuroscientists characterize this kind of baseline affect in terms of ‘microvalences’ that orient our perceptual attention in all kinds of ways (Lebrecht et al. 2012; Barrett and Bar 2009). This notion of ‘microvalence’ refers to the idea that there is an asymptotic process of homeodynamic self-regulation whose relatively neutral baseline — what I have called ‘the feeling of being alive’ — animates the lived body with a host of feelings that prime and motivate us to act, attend, and think in different ways in virtue of our perceiving tacit and fluctuating values in the world.

These feelings need not be as explicit as a strong feeling of disgust in the presence of a noxious odor or the craving that comes with the promise of a home cooked meal to end a prolonged hunger. It is in virtue of our feeling microvalences in response to our everyday commerce with useful objects that those objects come to be perceived by us has having the use-value that they do. Our perceptions recruit a host of associated memories that encode the content of those perceptions with a valence that we
interpret within the framework of numerous nested hierarchies of value ranging from basic pain and pleasure responses to goal achievement and personal ownership (Truon and Todd 2016).67

From a neurophysiological perspective, I have already discussed the role that pre-cortical structures play in subserving the realization of phylogenetically basic affects. However, it is also worth noting that areas like the orbitofrontal cortex which are known to be associated with context sensitivity, multimodal perceptual integration, and the evaluation of threat and reward also play a role in realizing our affective subjectivity, at least in normal cases (Barrett and Bar 2009).68 Cortical integration of this sort also plays an important role in subserving the evaluative processes which allow for the perception of objects as having a valence (micro or otherwise) and for our ability to feel one way or the other in response to the world showing up for us as having the value that it does. Given that the subcortical structures that necessarily subserve cortical function are deeply affective and the cross-modal integration of sensory content in various regions of the cortical cap are also affective, this means that the brain and body are affective all the way through (Pessoa 2013).

For example, it has been recently shown that perceptions of reward value function as a cross-modal integrator in perception, one that primes environment-responsive behaviour (Pooresmaeili et al. 2014). Subjects were primed to associate certain auditory tones with high and low monetary reward. They were then given a visual orientation discrimination task involving Gabor patches. It was found that the high-reward associated tones helped subjects to increase their visual accuracy in the discrimination task even though the tones and their associated rewards were not task-relevant. Such studies indicate that we have implicit attentional sets that are organized around reward via attraction to pleasure and avoiding pain. Even in situations that are not explicitly valenced around pain and

67 I will have more to say about this in §3.5
68 See chapter 4 for an examination of atypical cases.
pleasure, such attentional sets are operating as a background condition that orients our attention in various ways.\footnote{I will expand upon this idea in some detail from a cross-cultural perspective in chapter 6.}

This idea of an affectively oriented attentional set can be made clearer by considering some pathological cases. In an important study of veteran soldiers with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Rebecca Todd and colleagues (2015) have shown that such survivors have a radically altered salience map of their environment that is organized around their expectation of violent threats. In this experiment: "[MEG] data were collected while participants identified two targets in a rapidly presented stream of words. The first target was a number and the second target was either a combat-related or neutral word. The difference in accuracy for combat-related versus neutral words was used as a measure of attentional bias" (Todd et al. 2015, 821). This experiment is an attentional blink paradigm (AB) that utilizes that fact that subjects often miss targets within an approximately 500 milliseconds window after an initial target capture. There were three groups that were tested: (1) PTSD suffering soldiers, (2) non-PTSD suffering soldiers, and (3) non-military controls.

Both military groups had a decreased attentional blink when the second target was a combat-related word. There was also greater accuracy for combat versus non-combat words, but with overall accuracy decreases compared to non-military controls (ibid., 824). As the authors explain: "Crucially, soldiers with PTSD also rated combat-related words as significantly more arousing relative to neutral words than soldiers without PTDS, indicating a greater subjective emotional response to the words" (ibid., 826). The significance of these findings is substantial. We are pre-tuned to the world by phylogenetic endowment; that is, we are sensitive to objects in virtue of their affordance value to us (Gibson 1986; Chemero 2003). The contours of our salience map are also conditioned by our individual development, especially previous emotionally intense experiences. Both of these phylogenetic and ontogenetic factors radically condition our attentional control sets, and create biases that have an impact on the structure of the phenomenal field. Our affectively biased attention helps to
sculpt the contours of our affordance landscape by rendering the affectively relevant aspects of our environment salient to us (Walsh 2011). When traumatic experiences like violent combat traumatize us, the meaning of the world can change for us and this penetrates the phenomenal field of our perception and the lifeworld in which we dwell as conscious subjects.

We carry our trauma with us in our very perceptions of the world, because those perceptions are affectively biased and our affective biases are embodied in our experiences and reactions. This can be helpful and harmful. Being tuned to the world in this way can help us intelligently ignore those things that are not necessary or relevant for our survival, flourishing, and general goal achievement. This affective relation to the environment is harmful when we are overly or insufficiently sensitive or when traumatizing experiences re-organize our salience map in a way that prevents us from accurately discerning the contours of the affordance landscape. This process of salience construction is fallible and profoundly dependent on our habits of reaction to intense situations. Our habits of reaction are not always skillful. Whether skillful or not, these habitual reactons have as much impact on our attention sets — and thus, on what shows up as affectively salient — as do niche building affordance sensitivities.

Finally, in another important study, it has been shown that the spontaneous fluctuation of neural response to heartbeat is predictive of accuracy in visual detection tasks (Park et al. 2014). In this experiment participants were presented with a stimulus that was just at the threshold of visual detection. Subjects were instructed to fixate on the centre of the screen and were then given a warning stimulus followed by a 0.05 second exposure to a halo around the fixation point. This was followed by a delay and then a report as to whether they had seen the halo. The results show that successful visual discrimination can be reliably predicted by enhanced heartbeat response before stimulus onset. Such enhanced heartbeat response is differentially linked to pre-cortical pathways that connect reliably to the ventral anterior cingulate cortex, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, and the right inferior parietal lobe (ibid., 612). As the authors explain, “...heartbeat-evoked responses contribute directly to the signal used for the final perceptual decision” (ibid., 617). The dynamic and differential network of the circulatory and nervous system undergirds the precision with which perceptual information is
consciously experienced. Thus, our basic perceptual relation to our environment is the product not just of a skull-bound neural representation, but a whole-body responsiveness in which homeodynamic processing directly modulates the way in which the brain processes sensory information to realize conscious experience.

In this subsection, I have provided reasons for endorsing the second premise of my main argument for this chapter:

A2. The living body *affectively* relates the subject to the world.

It is not just that we feel private sensations within the framework of the body (A1). We do feel these things, but in feeling them our various bodily affects relate us to the world in a number of important ways (Ratcliffe 2008). In being so related, our commerce with the world is affective all the way through and all the way down. In the following sub-section I will try to draw out the argument’s conclusion as a way of pushing back against the objection from geometry. I then turn to some important objections to my view in the remaining sections of the chapter.

3.2.3 *Drawing Out the Conclusion and Consequences*

I now want to pull things together and discuss the final parts of the argument I have been developing. Recall that the third premise is the following:

A3. If the living body is a locus of subjectivity (A1) that affectively relates the subject to the world (A2), then it is not the case that the embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of subjective character.

The reasons for endorsing this conditional should be clear from what has been claimed already. Namely, that in virtue of our embodied experience of self and world being thoroughly affective, the embodied perspective of the organism is not *just* a geometrical constraint on an accurate description of phenomenal character. On the contrary, the pervasiveness of affect means that in virtue of being the kind of embodied creature that I am, the world is manifest to me as a field of solicitations that dwell
within my living body as a host of feelings that motivate and orient me to engage with the world. Thus, I can draw the conclusion embedded in the consequent of (A3). Namely:

\[ \text{A-C. It is not the case that the embodied perspective of the organism provides only a geometrical constraint on the nature of subjective character. [pace G2]} \]

More positively, being affectively related to the world by having an embodied perspective on it meets the significance constraint for a theory of subjective character. Therefore, the Affectively Embodied Perspectival view of subjective character is a viable theory of subjective character.

### 3.3 Bodily Affect and the Qualitative Character of Experience

In arguing for the (AEP) view of subjective character I have argued that bodily affect of different sorts partially constitutes the subjective character of phenomenally conscious experience (A1). One might object to the (AEP) view by arguing against (A1) on the grounds that bodily affect is always an instantiation of the qualitative character of experience, not of subjective character. This is not an uncommon view, especially for representational theories of consciousness which take phenomenal character to be exhausted by the qualitative character of experience, and the latter to be exhausted by representational content. According to this objection, the body only contributes to the phenomenal character of experience by being something that the subject is aware of as a content of an experience.

In response to this objection, I would point to an important distinction made by Edmund Husserl between two ways of thinking about the nature of the body. He called them ‘Leib’ and ‘Körper’ (Husserl 1997; 2001). The *Leib* is the living phenomenal body, as it shows up in experience. The *Körper*, by contrast is the third-personal body that is a physiological object. We can also distinguish between the body understood as an object and the body as a subject (Mandrigin and Thompson 2015; Truong and Todd 2016). I think that this objection belies a certain tendency of philosophers to think of bodily experience exclusively in terms of the body as a physiological object that *just happens* to show up in experience as might any other object of perception. When we understand how it is that the body shows up in experience as a subject, this objection evaporates. Put another way, framing the issue of experiencing bodily sensation in terms of one's being aware of one's body obfuscates the extent to
which one is one’s body. We are not only capable of being aware of our body as an object of perception. The living body also enters experience as a subject insofar as we can be aware with our body (Mandrigin and Thompson 2015). The body can be disclosed as a subject experiences the world by being a vehicle for perception (Colombetti 2014). Some phenomenological analysis will make this point clearer.

Consider instances of expert task absorption. When playing the drums, one is able to engage one’s entire body in a coordinated way that is highly salient to attention but not objectified. The body, in such situations is, "...neither transparent nor an intentional object of awareness; it is the body as experienced during the skillful performance of a specific activity when one need not attend to one’s body but is nevertheless very much aware of its presence and activity” (Colombetti 2014, 117-8). So, while playing the drums the entire body is fully deployed in the action and there is a high degree of foregrounded body awareness, but the object of attention is the music. The feelings in the body are not localized and specific but global and diffuse.

Unlike a local bodily sensation like an itch in the knee, in such situations, one’s whole body is felt in a diffuse but foregrounded way. In such situations, the body is disclosed as a perspectival locus of action and feeling. The feelings that animate the body during such experience are conspicuous though not objectified: "Conspicuous feelings...include 'highly self-luminous' foreground bodily feelings, namely, bodily feelings where the body is not an intentional object of experience but is nevertheless very much at the front of awareness” (Colombetti, 2014; 132). Ratcliffe (2008) calls bodily feelings of this kind, 'existential feelings'. Bodily feelings are 'existential' insofar as they provide the subject with a sense of being situated in and related to the world: "Existential feelings are both 'feelings of the body' and 'ways of finding oneself in a world'. By a 'way of finding oneself in a world', I mean a sense of the reality of self and of world, which is inextricable from a changeable feeling of relatedness.

Note, that in claiming that we are our bodies I am not endorsing the so-called 'mind-body identity' theory of consciousness (Smart 1959). The claim isn’t that consciousness is type-identical with some physical, behavioural, or functional property of the body. It is that the body is thoroughly phenomenal. The body is not simply an object, but an experiential subject.
between body and world" (Ratcliffe 2008, 2). Ratcliffe further describes two important characteristics of existential feelings. First, existential bodily feelings are not directed at specific objects or situations. They provide a phenomenological background of affectively charged embodiment through which the concrete specifics of experience are structured. Secondly, they are occurrent feelings in the body of which and with which we have awareness of ourselves and the world (ibid). In the context of the previous example, we can see the coordination of one's playing the drums with the other players one is working with as a way of providing a heightened context of salience whereby this more general poised orientation of the body towards the world can be seen in a clearer way. But in fact, this kind of orientation is always present in all experience; it is just usually in the background of attention.

Such feelings as I have described are constitutive of what it means to have a perceptual perspective on the world. They provide an 'affective frame' whereby the specific features of the world that we are attending to are put into relief. This is because, "...an individual's affective orientation makes her prone to certain patterns of thought and behaviour rather than others, shapes the way she attends to and interprets her surroundings, and thereby allows other cognitive processes of reasoning, deliberation, and justification to get off the ground" (Maiese, 2011; 5). Localized bodily sensations of whatever type are local perturbations emerging out of this more general phenomenological context of embodiment.

A proper appreciation of this background indicates that the subject of perceptual experience is thoroughly embodied and that the body should not be considered as being just an object of perceptual experience but also as being a subject. That is, "...the body-as-subject can be described as the embodied and subjective perspective of perception, in contrast to the body perceived as one object among others from within that perspective" (Mandrin and Thompson 2015). If these considerations are correct, then it appears that this first objection fails.

### 3.4 Attending to the Feeling Body

One might object to the argument for (AEP) by rejecting (A2). Recall that the second premise of the argument for (AEP) states that:
A2. The living body affectively relates the subject to the world.

So far, I have been arguing, in favor of this premise, that there is a kind of embodied affect, homeodynamic affect, or a feeling of being alive. This feeling is a holistic body sensation. It is constitutive of our subjective character, our sense that our experience of the world is for me. When we have an experience, it happens to and for a subject with a point of view on the world.

However, it might seem that (A2) is false on the grounds that bodily affect only enters experience by being the object of attention. If it were true that bodily affect, of whatever sort, only enters phenomenally conscious experience by being an object of attention, then it would not be the case that bodily affect relates a subject to their world, but that a subject is related to their bodily affect as an aspect of the world. Thus, this objection is a way of re-framing the objection from the previous section without committing to the view that bodily affect can only contribute to the qualitative character of experience. On this version of the objection, it might very well be the case that bodily affect can contribute to the subjective character of experience, but not in a ubiquitous way that relates the subject pre-reflectively to the world, but in a way that is only manifest when bodily feelings are attended to in a subject-centered act of reflection.

My view contains within it a tacit endorsement of a view about phenomenal consciousness that I now want to make explicit, one that this objection rejects. Distinguish between rich and thin views of phenomenal consciousness. Rich views claim that the content of phenomenal experience overflows our attentional capacities (Block 2007). There is a steady flow of multi-modal experience, only a fraction of which we actually attend to. The thin view maintains that we are perpetually subject to a refrigerator light illusion whereby we come to think that there is rich experience where there is none. When we are not attending to the world, our experience of it goes dark, just as when we close the refrigerator door, it does not stay lit within.

This dispute between rich and thin views of phenomenal consciousness can be understood in terms of the relationship between homeodynamically realized subjective character and attention. The idea is that the former is either partially or completely determined or perhaps is even constituted by
the latter (Charland 2005, Lambie and Marcel 2002, Schwitzgebel 2007). Such a view would constitute an objection to my account insofar as it would deny that there is a pervasive form of bodily affect that provides us with a subjective character and relates the subject affectively to a meaningful world. On the contrary, the thin view would claim that homeodynamic affects are experienced only when they are the object of attention. That is, the pervasiveness of homodynamic affect is an illusion generated by our habits of attention.

In support of this objection, it is worth noting that all of my earlier phenomenological analyses relied on attention in order to probe the body in different ways to gain access to diffuse, holistic bodily sensations. Consider another example: I am running a race and near to the finish line I develop a cramp in my side. At first it is faint and I keep running. As time wears on, the pain increases. I do my best to breathe through it but it keeps getting worse. I push myself as hard as I can and try my best to ignore it but the pain shows no signs of abetting. Gratefully, I cross the finish line and enjoy some well earned water. I pace about slowly and allow my pulse to normalize and I then sit down. To my dismay the pain in my side persists. Perhaps I've torn a muscle. I start to probe that part of my body with my awareness and really attend to it carefully, demarcating where the centre of pain is and where it starts to peter out into non-painful bodily feelings.

According to John Lambie and Anthony Marcel (2002) all of these examples of bodily affect should be accounted for in terms of the style of attention applied to it. At the onset of the pain, it was more in the periphery of my awareness, pushing itself into focus against my will due to its interruption of my goal of continuing to run at the same speed. When I sit down and pay more careful attention to the pain, things change. By attending to the pain in my side in a "...sufficiently analytic and detached manner, hedonic tone may be distanced, diminished and disappear" (Lambie and Marcel 2002; 243-4). Louis Charland thinks this capacity of attention to modulate affective experience can be generalized into an 'indeterminacy thesis'. According to this thesis, "...there is no intrinsic objective scientific fact about what the valence of a particular emotional affect or feeling is apart from its elaboration in second order awareness..." (Charland 2005; 233). This view can be used to criticize my view because I rely on an evolutionary account that sees all episodic emotion as built up out of an evolutionary process of
constructing core emotional affects out of common and predictable patterns of homeodynamic disequilibrium. If the phenomenal content of any affective state is only experienced as a result of a cognitive modulation by attention, then there is no room for the evolutionary story about pre-attentive felt affect to do its work in orienting and organizing sensory attention.

I must confess that I think the phenomenological analyses of attention and second-order awareness on offer from the objectors are clearly false. They conflate first-order embodied affect and second-order response. Attention can alter the latter, but not the former. By taking a more detached attitude towards the pain in my side I am able to modulate my reaction of aversion to the painful feeling in that part of my body. By so modulating my aversive reaction, the pain does not disappear. The nature of the first order affect itself is not constituted by my attention to it. Attention modulates my response to the pain. The pain has less impact on me mentally because my attitude towards it is modified by attention. The pain itself persists for some time and then disappears as homeodynamic equilibrium is re-established. Of course, it is fully available to my opponent(s) to deny this phenomenological description and to double down on their own intuitions about the issue. Thus, we ought to turn to some relevant empirical findings to help adjudicate the dispute.

Woo et al. (2015) have published a study that postulates distinct brain systems undergirding nociceptive input and self-regulation. Nociception is the process responsible for interpreting and integrating afferent nerve signals that indicate pain. This process is realized by a distributed network in the brain referred to as ‘the neurological pain signature’ (NPS). By contrast, the self-regulatory network responsible for the modulation of pain is realized by connections between the nucleus accumbens (NA), part of the basal ganglia near the hypothalamus, and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC).

In this experiment, thirty-three subjects were given thermal stimulation on their left forearm while connected to an fMRI scanner. Different trials of ascending temperatures were given with temperatures ranging from 44.3-49.3°C. On some trials, a self-regulation strategy was implemented whereby subjects would use active imagining and subvocal narratives to modulate their experience of
the pain induced by the thermal stimulation. On other trials, no such self-regulation strategy was implemented (Woo et al. 2015; 2). It was found that the NPS was of a similar level of activation in both types of trials. However, the self-regulation network was only active during those trials where the self-regulation strategy was implemented. During these self-regulation trials, the NPS was not affected. The NPS only responded to nociceptive input and the NA and vmPFC was non-responsive to this input. Thus, there is a primary pain input and a cognitive appraisal thereof. The latter can certainly influence the former insofar as it is able to modulate the felt intensity of pain. However, the baseline pain signals are not affected by such attentional modulation. Since pain was reported in both types of cases and I have already argued that pain is a type of homeodynamic affect, we can conclude that homeodynamic affect is not constituted by attention.

Another related point is this. Panksepp and Biven (2012) point out that there is a remarkable cross-species homology in the brain stem and lower midbrain, which comprise the neural basis of homeodynamic and core emotional affects. This shared ancestry is relevant because it provides at least some indication that there is a strong evolutionary pressure that helps to forge the physical basis of feeling in the more ancient parts of the brain. By extension, the content of those feelings is also realized under such pressures. So, the nature and phenomenal content of basal affects are not determined by attention alone.

One point I do want to concede is that attention to affect is important. Eric Schwitzgebel (2007) makes this point in a helpful way by focusing on the inadequacies of both rich and thin views of phenomenal experience. Both views suffer from being underdetermined by available empirical evidence and under motivated by introspective report. My own view tends towards a Jamesean version of the rich view. According to James, "...every one of the bodily changes, whatsoever it be, is felt, acutely or obscurely, the moment it occurs....Our whole cubic capacity is sensibly alive; and each morsel of it contributes its pulsations of feeling, dim or sharp, pleasant, painful, or dubious, to that sense of personality that everyone of us unfailingly carries with him" (James 1890/1950, Vol. II; 450-
However, this may be too phenomenologically extravagant or at least subject relative. The lesson that attentional modulation teaches us is that the background of attention is structured differently for some individuals than for others. Following Schwitzgebel (2007), it is reasonable to conclude that there is always some phenomenal experience outside the focus of attention. This view that there is always some non-attentional phenomenal experience is what he calls a 'moderate view'. I would add that some of this background is always and necessarily bodily. If we did not have at least some tacit experience of being alive, we would likely be dead. Nevertheless, some version of the moderate view is all the (AEP) view of subjective character requires. I will now briefly mention some necessary modifications before moving on.

I am sympathetic with the moderate view but would add the following point. My hypothesis is that what ends up counting as experientially in the background, on one hand, and as unconscious information processing, on the other, will be a matter of affective bias and attentional habituation. One’s habits of attending determine not just the way the foreground of experience appears in relation to the background but also the scope and structure of the background itself. Attention is a skill and some people are better at it than others. Some people’s background can hold more than others. Thus, James’ conception of a fully conscious person is not so much a default reality but rather an empirical possibility. Perhaps James was accurately describing his own experience; it certainly resonates with my own.

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71 Cited by Schwitzgebel (2007; 9).

72 This might seem like an odd expression given the phenomenon of deep sleep and anesthesia, but see Thompson (2015).

73 Schwitzgebel offers two possible hypotheses for how the moderate view might go. One is diffuse attention, which would be a way of equating consciousness with a broader sense of attention and would allow us to understand how we might have experience that goes across some modalities, but not all (Schwitzgebel 2007; 25). The other is to think of concentration as a resource that pulls some things into consciousness at the expense of others. I prefer talk of concentration over attention, because I think there is something informative and appealing about having non-attentional experience. I am enough of a Jamesean to think that there is some constitutive connection between the concept 'attention' and focalization whereby experience is structured into an attended foreground and an unattended background (James 1890/1950, Vol. I; 403-4; Watzl 2011). It is possible that this distinction is merely terminological.
3.5 The Pendulum of Consciousness: Affect, Agency, and Subjectivity

In this final section, I want to include some consideration of agential views of subjectivity, in particular, the enactive or sensorimotor approaches to phenomenal character. Generally, the enactive approach maintains that mental processing is a form of embodied action that enacts a meaningful world of relevance (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 1991, 107). However, there are different versions of this view. My approach is friendly to some, but not to others. Therefore, first I will sketch a possible worry that some enactivists might have with the (AEP) view of subjective character and then I will argue that enactivists with such a worry have an impoverished view of enactivism. I then provide some reasons for thinking that my view is friendly to some versions of enactive approaches and that these approaches are to be preferred over the ones that cannot accommodate my view.

Enactive or sensorimotor approaches to perception claim that perception is constitutively linked with action. The idea is that when we perceive objects we do not do so merely as passive information processors. Objects are not sensory inputs and our subsequent judgements and actions are not outputs. Instead, perception of objects and our sensorimotor capacities are dynamically integrated. In Alva Noë’s words: “Perceptual experience acquires content thanks to our possession of bodily skills. What we perceive is determined by what we do (or what we know how to do); it is determined by what we are ready to do.” (Noë 2004; 1). Perception is sensorimotor know-how; it is skill based embodied action.74

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74 Enactivism is empirically motivated in the following ways. Noë (2004; 4-7) notes some interesting cases where patients suffering from cataracts – which obstruct the passage of light through the retina – who have them removed but are still blind. They are ‘experientially’ blind because the passage of light through the retina has been restored but the sensations the subject experiences do not assist them in thought or action about the world. It takes active movement of the body to integrate the sensations in such a way that the persistence of the objects can be apprehended. Now, Noë is right to point out that there is an interpretation of these results which does not necessitate an enactive approach. Specifically, it is possible that the quality of the sensations themselves are the cause of the perceptual distortions given the immediacy of the cataract removal. Nevertheless, this initial case gives some indication of how the active sensorimotor dynamics of the embodied agent could play a more central role in perception than has been genuinely thought.
One of the things that philosophers of perception in general are concerned with — not just enactive theorists — is something called ‘perceptual presence’. Perceptual presence refers to the fact that when I visually perceive an object, I perceive it as three-dimensional in spite of the fact that the occluded sides are not reflecting photons to my retina when I look at it (Jacob, 2015). The enactive account of presence is built right into its fundamental view about what perception is. Presence emerges given the fact that what it is to perceive an object is tied up with our having a practical understanding of how stimulus would change with movement. The reason stimulus changes with movement is that different profiles of an object become salient as one moves around it. Thus, the object presents itself in any given profile as being capable of presenting other such profiles. It is this concatenation of possible profiles — as implicitly understood by the agent in terms of her capacity to move so as to reveal those profiles — that explains perceptual presence for enactivism.

This view of perception and perceptual presence is pre-figured in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012) who spoke of the normativity of perception. For example, Merleau-Ponty writes, “The distance between me and the object is not a size that increases or decreases, but rather a tension that oscillates around a norm. The oblique orientation of the object in relation to me is not measured by the angle that it forms with the plane of my face, but rather experienced as a disequilibrium, as an unequal distribution of its influences upon me.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012; 316). The reason an object is experienced in its obliqueness as a disequilibrium is that for Merleau-Ponty, perception of an object as that object brings with it a norm for perceiving it in maximal relief. This norm is revealed to me in the way that my body has an ‘optimal attitude’ which it aims for in a perceptual situation with an object. As Sean Kelly puts it, “Every experience of size or shape is not just the perceptual representation of a property. Rather, the experience already involves a kind of normative self-referentiality: It is part of the very experience of the size of an object that I am drawn to improve the experience by changing my distance to the object.” (Kelly, 2007; 149; Kelly 2010). This notion self-referentiality can be explained in terms of the embodied subject’s sense of what it would take for them

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to move in such a way so as to change the object’s profile, and their perspective on it, such that a new movement resultant perspective would be maximized in terms of the object’s size and shape being seen by the subject.

Such a view might be construed as problematic for my account for the following reasons. I have been at pains to describe the subjective character of experience as an essentially affective phenomenon. I have gone as far as to characterize the affective nature of subjective character in terms of an organism’s capacity to be hedonically perturbed by its interactions with its environment. Indeed, on my view, sensory bombardment is a kind of ever-present burden by which we are passively affected by the world, we are weighted down by it, to the cellular level (Cook et al. 2014). We struggle to maintain homeodynamic equilibrium in the face of ceaseless perturbations of different sorts. In this way, I have characterized the embodied subject as a kind of patient or victim, one who is constantly, passively, and affectively perturbed by their environment. The enactive view emphasizes the agent in its analysis of phenomenal character. The perceptual presence of the world is the organism’s achievement. The domain of meaning that the organism lives within is enacted by that organism. Affordance landscapes or niches are constructed by the activity of organisms. To adequately explain the phenomenal character of experience, one must account for these active agential features of the embodied subject. Being passively affected and hedonically perturbed are not sufficient to explain subjective character.

Broadly speaking, I think that this criticism is exactly right. But I also think that in accepting it, my view is enriched rather than weakened. However, to take the point on board requires some nuance, as the enactive approach to perception is both controversial and polysemous (Hutto and Myin 2013). Considering its controversial status, in acknowledging my friendliness to enactivism, I do not wish to fully endorse it, as I think my view can still be adopted by those who reject enactive approaches. Additionally, since there are many versions of the view, I want to get clear on two important species of the enactive genus. My view is friendly to one but not to the other.

Alva Noë’s (2004) account of enactivism focuses exclusively on how the dynamics of attention disclose the perceptual presence of explicitly intentional objects in terms of the subject’s tacit
knowledge of what it would take to move to further disclose otherwise occluded profiles of the perceived object. This is a more restrictive account of enactivism because its conception of how perceptual presence is constituted focuses exclusively on the idea that perception is a form of action constituted by knowledge of sensorimotor contingencies. This knowledge is delivered to the subject by its capacities for attending to that which it perceives.

The problem with this attention-centred view of enactivism is twofold. First, Thompson (2005, 2007) points out that the sensorimotor approach to perception does not account for what it is to be a sensorimotor agent and to have a meaningful world of relevance, and argues that to account for these things we need a fully enactive account that includes the notion of an autonomous sense-making system. The restrictive enactive view assumes too much by way of the world appearing to us as a meaningful place for action. The more important criticism is the following. An enactive account of perception must necessarily include an analysis of the pre-reflective experience of being a bodily subject in and through affect. The attention-centred view neglects an analysis of our subjectivity as a constituent of phenomenal character (Thompson 2005; 2007). Attentional and sensorimotor agency modify an already existing subject’s experience. Attention and action structure and sculpt the contours of our phenomenal field, they do not exclusively constitute it (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012). Our capacity to attend and agentially respond to the world depends on a subject being already affected in some way by its experience of the world (Husserl 2001). This is because “whatever becomes noticeable must already have been affecting one and must have some kind of affective force or allure, or affective ‘grabbiness’, in relation to one’s attention” (Thompson 2007, 263). My view is friendly to a version of enactivism that makes room for the affective substructure that primes and orients the organism to be able to respond to the world with its various capacities for agency (sensorimotor, attentional, cognitive).

Still, it might be protested that the agential structure of experience makes the world available in a way that goes beyond the structures of affect that I have outlined in this chapter. For example, a mug might afford holding but have no affective pull on a subject whose knowledge of the mug’s perceptual presence is based on knowledge of how to move with respect to it. Thus, the extent to which
an object affords certain actions to a subject does not necessarily tell us anything about its affective salience.

Fair enough. My view doesn’t entail that every particular content of perception has an explicit affective valence. The point is that the world first and foremost exerts a force upon the subject in the form of sensory bombardment. This subject is hedonically perturbed by such bombardment. It is in virtue of being affectively perturbed by the world that a subject responds with sensorimotor and attentional agency, sculpting out a niche for itself in order to survive. Thus, we might characterize affective subjectivity as a kind of to-me-ness to capture the fact that experience is at its most basic something that happens to us. In turn, we can then characterize the agential component of subjectivity as for-me-ness to capture the extent to which the world is subsequently interpreted and shaped by the organism’s purposes in responding to its initial affective perturbation (Christoff et al. 2011). Our subjective lives are like a pendulum swinging back and forth between hedonic disturbance and agential response.

**Conclusion**

I began this chapter with a consideration of an important objection to the embodied perspectival view of subjective character (EP). The majority of the remainder of the chapter was dedicated to transforming the embodied perspectival view into the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character (AEP). As embodied subjects who live through phenomenally conscious experiences, we inhabit a living body and populate a meaningful world that is thoroughly affective in multiple overlapping ways. Thus, this chapter has been an extended argument in favor of the third premise of the master argument that affect is constitutive of the embodied perspective of the experience-having-organism. We are now in a position to derive the first conclusion of the master argument; namely, that affect is constitutive of phenomenal character. All phenomenal experience is affective in some way and to some degree.

In responding to some substantial objections to my view I have bolstered and expanded it to embrace important insights regarding the nature of attention and agency. I have tried to show that at
the root of the mind is a capacity to be affectively perturbed by the world and that we in turn respond with cognitive, attentional, and sensorimotor agency.

In the chapters that follow, I will develop my view by looking at the possibility of cross-cultural enrichment. As it turns out, much of what I have argued for here has been prefigured in different ways in the thinking of Indian Buddhist philosophers. Their insights have much to teach us. Additionally, I deepen my engagement with the empirical literature on affect to further forge important connections between our affectively embodied experience of the world and our capacity to fluidly respond to it.
Phenomenal Overflow and Two Kinds of Access

A young tender infant does not even have the notion ‘sensual pleasures,’ so how could sensual desire arise in them? Yet the underlying tendency to sensual lust lies within them.

Mahāmālunkyaputta Sutta (MN I 432)

Introduction

Having now provided some positive arguments in favor of the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character (AEP), in this chapter I consider one of two explanatory upshots of the view. The second will be taken up in the second part of the dissertation where I explore the question of the epistemic role of consciousness in a theory of mind. Here, I consider the phenomenal overflow thesis, the claim that the content of phenomenally conscious mental states can exceed the capacities of cognitive access.

Pre-theoretically speaking, the thesis is commonsensical. We have all kinds of experiences that we don’t think about. Consider the experience of pain in my behind that I don’t notice because I am sitting and listening to a well-delivered lecture. My cognitive resources are deployed in attending to the meaning of the words I am hearing, but I am also experiencing pain in my posterior even though I am not attending to it. More technically, proponents of the phenomenal overflow thesis hold the view that we can have experiences that either cannot be used, or at least are not being used, by working memory, or do not serve as input for functions of cognitive access like intentional action, inference, or speech.76 According to the AEP view, we are always undergoing some affective experience or the other. Thus, this view is committed to some version of the overflow thesis. We are feeling things that we don’t always process with the resources of cognitive access. Thinking about the question of phenomenal

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76 More generally, philosophers tend to be of the view that explaining phenomenal consciousness constitutes a particularly difficult philosophical project, while explaining cognitive access is decidedly less difficult (Chalmers 1996). Thus, discussion of the relation between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness is thought by some to be germane to explaining the hard problem by analyzing phenomenal consciousness in terms of access consciousness (e.g. Prinz 2011).
overflow from the perspective of affect rather than the content of visual experience will be the novel contribution of this chapter.

I have two purposes in mind for this chapter. First, I will argue that the normal ways in which this debate is carried out — between those who reject and those who endorse the phenomenal overflow thesis — is something of a dead end. The evidence often cited in support of this view stems from experiments in the psychology of attention. To be sure there is a lot to learn within the hub of this discussion about the nature of attention and consciousness, but so far it has not been able to resolve the truth or falsity of the phenomenal overflow thesis. Therefore, my second purpose is to consider alternative empirical evidence that provides good reason for endorsing a version of the overflow thesis.

My approach to substantiating the phenomenal overflow thesis has some benefits that the more common approach lacks. Specifically, proponents of the phenomenal overflow thesis who rely on the psychology of attention for evidence tend to find themselves committed to what I have called ‘the nomological dangler conception of consciousness’ (Smart 1950). This is the view that the phenomenal character of experience has nothing to do with the functions of the mind. Consciousness in this way merely dangles as a conceptual outlier amidst the smooth operations of an otherwise non-conscious mental system. This conception of consciousness is problematic because it violates basic intuitions we have about the fact that it is in virtue of being conscious of the world that we can come to know things about it and act on the basis of that knowledge (Clark and Kiverstein 2007; Campbell 2002; 2004). My approach to the overflow thesis avoids this problem by focusing on the way in which experience is connected to the capacity of organisms to be hedonically perturbed by their environment. I present this argument by considering the special case of hydranencephalic children, patients who were born without a functioning cortex. I argue that these subjects have experience, or phenomenal consciousness, but no cognitive access, that is, no capacity to use the content of their representations.
for intentional speech, inference, or action. Instead, I argue that these subjects have something called 'affective access', the details of which I will explain below.

Here is a breakdown of this chapter's argument, which I call “The Affective Overflow Argument” (AO):

**AO1.** Hydranencephalic patients are phenomenally conscious.

**AO2.** Hydranencephalic patients do not have access consciousness.

**AO-C1.** Phenomenal consciousness is not constituted by access consciousness.

**AO3.** Hydranencephalic patients have access-like functioning that is grounded not in cognition but in primordial affect.

**AO4.** If hydranencephalic patients have access-like functioning that is grounded not in cognition but in primordial affect, then phenomenal consciousness does not overflow this affectively grounded access (which I call ‘affective access’).

**AO-C2.** Phenomenal consciousness does not overflow this affectively grounded access (which I call ‘affective access’).

I will provide reasons for endorsing this argument in §2. In §1, I define key terms and explain why I think that the usual way this debate is carried out is not helpful. In §3 I consider two important objections before providing some brief conclusions.

### 4.1 Perceptual Psychology and Overflow

In this section I take on three related tasks. The first is to set out some definitions and conceptual clarifications. The second to is explain an empirical argument for the phenomenal overflow thesis. Finally, I examine an important criticism of this argument.

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77 I use the terms ‘cognitive access’ and ‘access consciousness’ synonymously.
4.1.1 Definitional Preliminaries

I begin with some definitions. By 'phenomenal consciousness' I refer to those mental states for which *there is something it is like for* one to have them (Nagel, 1974). I will also use the term 'experience' to refer to such mental states, events, and processes (Soteriou 2013). When I have a phenomenally conscious visual perception of an apple, there is something it is like for me as a subject of experience to see the apple, for it to seem a certain way to me; red, shiny, and possibly delicious, say. I then think to myself, '<I am hungry, I should eat that apple>'. I then turn to you and say, 'Gosh, that apple looks delicious, I think will eat it'. Finally, I walk over to the fruit bowl, take a bite of the apple and continue our previous conversation. In response to my experience of the apple as seeming red, shiny, and delicious, I have done three things. I have engaged in an inference, I have generated an intentional remark (to you, my hypothetical interlocutor), and I have executed an intentional action guided by the imperative embedded in my inference. In short, I have used my capacities for cognitive access to the content of that visual perception to generate various behaviors.

"Cognitive access" or "access consciousness" is a dispositional notion that refers to information being poised for use in different forms of cognitive processing. As I have mentioned, the three main examples of such processing are inference, speech, and action. More precisely, a mental state $M$ is A-consciousness if $M$'s content, in virtue of being represented by subject $S$, is one or all of the following: poised for use as a premise in an inference, poised for use in the rational control of action, or poised for the rational control of speech (Block 1995, 231). However, this definition is complicated by the fact that there are many different types of psychological processes that seem to count as A-consciousness. For example, common terms used to describe A-conscious processes include, 'attention', 'introspection', 'awareness', and 'report' (Block 2007). It's not clear that these are all species of a single genus.

One way to conceptually unify A-consciousness is to think about it in terms of an executive system in the brain. The plurality of psychological specifications can be unified in virtue of each psychological predicate for access being a token of a type of functional process in the cortex. The 'global-workspace theory of consciousness' is an empirical framework based on this idea (Baars 1997).
The theory is a functional one and therefore the workspace it posits as a model for the mind is multiply realizable. However, most of the empirical research that utilizes this theory as its foundation has focused on the cortical system as the primary realizer of consciousness. On this view, a visual mental state \( V \) is A-conscious if its content is represented by an information processing system that involves, "...large-scale re-entrant interaction between posterior visual cortex and frontoparietal regions" (Shanahan and Baars 2007, 525). This cortical network is called a 'workspace' because it integrates signals from all over the brain and then recruits those areas into even more extended networks of activation. The notion of 'broadcasting' captures the idea that if a pattern of neural activation of whatever sort, "...is propagated by this white matter infrastructure [in the cortex], and thereby comes to exercise widespread influence in the brain" (ibid), then it is A-conscious.

I distinguish two versions of the overflow thesis. The strong version of the thesis claims that there are phenomenally conscious mental states that are in principle cognitively inaccessible. The more moderate version of the overflow thesis states that it might be the case that the contents of all phenomenally conscious states are in principle accessible but are often not accessed. When I am experiencing mild discomfort in my posterior from sitting too long while listening to a lecture, I might start attending to that pain but I do not do so. In this way my pain is accessible but not accessed. Unless otherwise specified, all subsequent references to the 'phenomenal overflow thesis' will concern the moderate version of the phenomenal overflow thesis.

4.1.2 \textit{The Sperling Paradigm}

The evidence often cited in support of the phenomenal overflow thesis comes from the Sperling partial report experiments (Sperling 1960; Block 2007). In such cases subjects are shown three rows of four alphanumerical characters for 50 ms. This is followed by a blank field. Subjects report that during the 50 ms interval they can see all twelve characters. When asked to specify which characters were seen, subjects can report the specific identities of an average of four characters. In different cases, there are priming signals given, either visual or auditory, to cue the subject's attention to one of the rows of the alphanumeric array. When asked to report on the identities of the characters after being presented
with the full array and then cued, the four-character average persists in terms of reporting, but the report is specific to the row that was cued (Block 2007, 487).

Block’s interpretation of these results is that we have a phenomenally conscious perception of the twelve alphanumerical characters during the 50 ms window and that only four of those characters are capable of being cognitively accessed by being broadcast in the global workspace. In this way, the content of our phenomenally conscious mental state of the characters overflows our cognitive access to it.

Here is a more formal presentation of Block’s argument for phenomenal overflow from these Sperling-type experiments (Block 2007):

B1. Subjects experience all twelve of the figures during initial exposure to the alphanumerical grid.

The plausibility of this first premise is derived from the verbal reports of the subjects of the experiment. Subjects saying that they experience all twelve alphanumerical figures is good, though defeasible, evidence that they have in fact experienced all twelve alphanumerical figures.

B2. Subjects, on average, can only report the identities of four figures during the report task.

This second premise is just an empirical fact that falls out of the average reportability capacities of the subjects who participated in the experiment.

B3. If subjects cannot report the identities of some figures, then they do not have cognitive access to those figures.

The third premise constitutes a controversial interpretation of (B2). The inference is controversial because it claims that lack of reportability in this case is equivalent to lack of cognitive access. After all, report is only one of three ways that cognitive access can be instantiated; using the content of a representation as the premise in an inference or for intentional action are the other two. However, in experimental paradigms, verbal report is the hallmark of attributing consciousness (both access and phenomenal). A subject reporting that they’ve seen something is excellent evidence for the belief that
they have seen it. Thus, even though the premise is controversial, it is a plausible interpretation of the results. Given the short time interval of exposure to the alphanumeric grid, it is possible that the reason subjects are able to report only on a small subsection of the figures is because they were unable to attend to them and thus unable to select the content for the kind of output that typifies cognitive access (inference, speech and action).

Given this interpretation of the first two premises, we can then derive the following two conclusions:

**B-C1.** Subjects do not have cognitive access to the unreportable figures.

And,

**B-C2.** Subjects experience figures that overflow their capacities for cognitive access.

This experiment provides scientific behavioral data that supports the commonsensical motivational thrust for the phenomenal overflow thesis, i.e. that we experience much more than we are capable of engaging with explicitly or intentionally with our cognitive apparatus.

In spite of the common-sense appeal of the thesis and the data that support it, some philosophers have been at great pains to deny the overflow thesis. This is because they see cognitive access as something that is straightforwardly reducible to the physical and functional properties of the organism, and they maintain that phenomenal consciousness can be explained in terms of access consciousness. Thus, this explanatory model provides a possible reductive explanation of phenomenal consciousness. If it turns out that phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness are two different sorts of consciousness that operate in parallel, then this reductive strategy will fail.\(^78\) Thus, this overflow-friendly interpretation of the Sperling experiments comes in for trenchant critique from

\(^78\) This is not the only reductive strategy. Block (1995; 2003) favors an identity view that is reminiscent of Smart (1969). On this view, phenomenal properties are type-identical with physical properties in the brain.
philosophers who subscribe to the reductive strategy of explaining phenomenal consciousness in terms of access consciousness. I focus on one such interpretation in what follows.

4.1.3 Degrees of Access

Michael Cohen and Daniel Dennett (2011) claim that the Sperling cases do not provide evidence in favor of the phenomenal overflow thesis. They argue that you do have cognitive access to the unreported figures; however, the access is limited to knowing *that* one has seen those figures. On their view, the Sperling results are consistent with the idea that there are degrees of access and that degrees of access do not commit us to endorsing the phenomenal overflow thesis. According to Cohen and Dennett, the sense of seeing all of the characters during the 50 ms interval is a result of cognitive resources, in this case, attention, being distributed. On account of the subject’s capacities for cognitive access being so distributed, Cohen and Dennett contend that the subject is not able to process the image with a sufficiently high resolution for conscious recognition of individual identities (Cohen and Dennett, 2011, 359-60). The claim is that in both cases (initial exposure and subsequent report), there is some access in play. If there is always some access in play, then there is no overflow. Let’s look at this counterargument in some detail.

The objection amounts to the denial of the conditional (B3) in the above argument (B). By denying this conditional, the objection prevents the inference to (B-C1) and (B-C2). According to this objection, the consequent of (B3) does not follow from the antecedent because there may be degrees of access. The meaning of this idea will become clear as we proceed.

The objection is happy to grant the truth of the first premise of the overflow argument (B1) that subjects experience all twelve of the alphanumeric figures during initial exposure to the grid. However, this objection proceeds by pointing out that subjects can report only the *individual* identities of four figures during the report task. This lack of capacity to report individual identities in the post-cue phase of the experiment must be understood alongside the fact that subjects *can* report that they saw twelve figures during initial exposure. The dual-focus on individual and general reportability is the heart of the objection. In both the initial exposure and subsequent report scenarios there is some...
access in play. During the initial 50 ms exposure to the alphanumerical grid, the subject has the capacity to identify the alphanumerical characters as 'characters' but does not have a sufficiently high-resolution perceptual representation to be able to report the identities of all the individual characters. These considerations motivate the claim that the difference between initial exposure and subsequent individual identity report is one of degree. Access consciousness is present in both cases.

Cohen and Dennett (2011) frame their analysis of cognitive access in terms of attention. According to them, the sense of seeing all of the characters during the 50 ms interval is a result of attention being distributed and thus not able to process the content of the representation with a sufficiently high resolution for conscious recognition of individual identities (359-60). The claim is that in both cases (initial exposure and subsequent report), there is some access in play. However, if there are degrees of access functioning at every level of processing in the experiment, then lack of individual reportability of the twelve alphanumeric figures during initial exposure does not entail lack of cognitive access. Rather, it entails that the distributed attention involved in seeing all twelve figures is coarse grained enough to prevent the subject from reporting more than they could see ‘the characters’ but not all of their individual identities. Therefore, pace (B3) and (B-C1), lack of individual reportability does not entail lack of cognitive access because some degree of cognitive access is present in both initial exposure and subsequent report. But if cognitive access is present in all cases, then the motivation for the phenomenal overflow thesis evaporates because the latter just is the claim that there are phenomenal contents of experience that are not accessed. The conclusion plainly follows that there is no phenomenal overflow in Sperling-type cases (pace BC2).

Cohen and Dennett argue that the more general form of access displayed through the agent’s capacity to conceptualize the characters as 'characters' indicates that some degree of cognitive access
is required for phenomenal consciousness of the array. The view then generalizes: there is always some degree of cognitive access in play in any phenomenally conscious experience.

To summarize, the phenomenological results where subjects claim to have seen all twelve characters, in spite of being able to verbally report the identities of only four, can be understood in two different ways. On Block’s view, the phenomenally conscious experience of the twelve characters overflows our cognitive access to the four reported characters. For Cohen and Dennett, there is unconscious information about all of the characters and the cue grants access to the specific identity of the characters (2011, 359). In response to introspective reports to the effect that subjects had seen the entire array, Cohen and Dennett reply that there is distributed attention that facilitates less precise cognitive access to the characters than does focal attention (Prinz 2011). In these cases, the distributed attention is a by-product of focal attention being unable to be entirely engaged with its task of specifying the identities of individual characters (Cohen and Dennett 2011, 360).

Some might think that the case for phenomenal overflow is clearly refuted by the above counterargument. If that’s so, then the proponent of the phenomenal overflow thesis needs to find alternative evidence. I think the situation is more complex. Block, or someone who endorses his position, might respond to this argument by pointing out that our experiences stay with us for some time in what Block calls a ‘phenomenal memory buffer’ (2007) and that our general capacity to report that we have seen ‘some characters’ is just the post-facto report of what we experience. Such an interpretation is consistent with the idea that we are, during exposure, experiencing something that we do not cognitively access, and that it is only later when asked to do so that we explicitly access the content of our experience to issue a report. Thus, it is consistent for the phenomenal overflow proponent to maintain that we still have overflow in this case. Further, it might be argued that the

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79 Block acknowledges the second version of this point regarding the subject's general capacity to conceptualize their experience in terms of 'letters' (Block 2007, 489). He does not seem to think this is a problem for his view in the way that I have outlined.
coarse-grained nature of the report abilities embodied in the initial response to the grid are less rich than the experience itself, which is to say, that even if there is some cognitive access present during the experience of the grid, it is of a different level or degree than the vivid richness of the experience itself, and that this difference in grain is sufficient to maintain that overflow is happening in such cases. However, the overflow denier will simply persist in the view that the operative difference between the two reports is that one report indicates a coarse grained attentionally distributed cognitive access and the other report indicates a fine grained attentionally focused cognitive access.

Adjudicating these disputes is difficult because it seems that both interpretations are consistent with the behavioral results. Both views have a coherent explanation as to why subjects can only report the identities of a limited number of the characters. Whatever interpretation one favors probably has something to do with which theory one prefers. For example, Cohen and Dennett rely a lot on the notion of attention as if it is straightforwardly an obvious candidate to help reduce phenomenal consciousness to access consciousness (see also Prinz 2011). However, for this to work they will need an analysis of distributed attention. The idea that our attention is something that can be spread out and not have a focus that gives us precise information about a specific target at the expense of other potential targets is somewhat puzzling. From a phenomenological point of view, one might think that this kind of gestalt structure is the hallmark of attention, William James (1890/1950) certainly did (see also, Watzl 2011). Thus, to use such a notion of attention as a way of analyzing cognitive access such that it can do the work of reducing phenomenal consciousness brings with it some heavy theoretical commitments that seem to violate common sense. That is not an argument against this approach per se, but just an indication of how complex this debate becomes when we start to get precise about what the various positions are.

Additionally, overflow deniers also need to argue that attention is itself not a phenomenal kind, that is, that there isn’t something about attention that entails phenomenal consciousness. For example, it might be argued that what it is to attend is for a subject to be phenomenally conscious of something in a particular way (William James thought something like this was true). If it’s true that attention is definitionally phenomenally conscious, then more conceptual analysis is needed before
the concept of attention can be used to explain away phenomenal consciousness. This is perhaps an achievable goal, but it will require much philosophical heavy lifting. Therefore, I am inclined to think that the key terms of this debate are not yet agreed upon enough to resolve the issue.

Finally, it is also worth noting that in this dispute, the emphasis has been on vision and the empirical studies consulted have tended to focus on verbal report. At least part of the problem lies here. The persistent emphasis on vision and behavioral data mediated by cognitive access makes it difficult to escape the explanatory circle between verbal report and phenomenally conscious states (Block 2007). This is part of what motivates the critic of the overflow thesis. All evidence cited in support is cited by subjects who report on their phenomenology with the tools of cognitive access. By looking at different sorts of data coming out of affective neuroscience, and pediatric neurology in particular, we can get more traction on the question of whether or not phenomenal consciousness overflows cognitive access. Indeed, as I will argue, I think there is important evidence to suggest that phenomenal consciousness does overflow cognitive access, but with some important caveats.

4.2 Alternative Evidence for the Overflow Thesis

In this section, I will consider cases of hydranencephaly and argue that such cases provide good reason to endorse a version of the phenomenal overflow thesis. Hydranencephaly is a disorder where some human beings and animals are born without either cerebral hemisphere. The space in the cranium that would otherwise be filled by the cortical cap is instead filled with cerebrospinal fluid. In the absence of such a major piece of neurophysiology, such individuals possess no functioning cortical network, and perhaps no global workspace.

In the four human children with this condition who were the subject of this study, there is suggestive behavioral evidence of a rich affective life. Consider that: "[T]he setting of the home environment upon which these medically fragile children are crucially dependent, they give proof of being not only awake, but of the kind of responsiveness to their surroundings that qualifies as conscious by the criteria of ordinary neurological examination" (Merker 2007, 79). The original study that Merker is referring to was carried out by affective neuroscientists and physicians at UCLA,
Harvard University, and the Medical College of Ohio (Shewmon et al. 1999). They interacted extensively with a number of hydranencephalic children who were adopted by a nurse at a local hospital. Each case had unique details that I cannot canvass here. What is important is the structurally invariant features of their conditions. I focus on two such features.

First, all of the children developed a kind of affective compensation for loss of cognitive function. Specifically, "...decorticate children are extremely sensitive to changes in routine and environment. They are easily disturbed by rides to the doctors' offices and by strange people and surroundings, in such settings they often involute and fail to manifest any cognitive functions that parents might report" (Shewmon et al. 1999, 372). Part of this affective irritability derives from the fact that such children begin life almost universally in a state of high agitation which only calms into a more relaxed affective state with the establishing of routine, comfort, and affection (Shewmon et al. 1999, 366). There is a high degree of agitation at the beginning of life because there is much physical atrophy, probably due to the lack of a motor-cortex, which allows for the proper development of the capacity to move under command.

Second, only once sustained affective relations and physical comfort are established are more stable patterns of interpersonal interaction and differential preferences established. Touch and sound are essential in this regard. At age 10, one subject had to go to the hospital because of an upper-airway obstruction. His mother accompanied him in the ambulance where, "...as long as he [the patient,] heard her reassuring voice and felt her caresses, his oxygen saturation remained tenuously stable, but whenever she stopped, it quickly deteriorated" (Shewmon et al. 1999, 370). In this case, something as physiologically basic as the ease of breathing is profoundly affected by the familiar touch and soothing voice of a caregiver. Without such a reassuring context, in many cases, such subjects become unresponsive to any interactions. For example, the same child was unresponsive to attempts by one of the study's authors at gentle vocal and tactile interaction.

I suggest that we take these results to show that hydranencephalic subjects are able to live radically care-dependent, but nonetheless rich, phenomenally conscious lives, in the absence of a
cortically realized global workspace. This gives us strong reason to endorse the first premise of the main argument of this chapter:

**AO1.** Hydranencephalic patients are phenomenally conscious.

This might seem like a significant claim to make, but consider the common alternative, denying that such subjects have experiences at all. I think it is clear that the empirical evidence discussed here indicates that such subjects enjoy *some* kind of phenomenally conscious experience. Whether or not the absence of a cortical workspace amounts to the absence of cognitive access remains to be seen. I think it does. So far I have focused on the extent to which these patients are cognitively deficient and caretaker dependent. However, it is arguably more important to focus on the positive capacities these subjects enjoy to further convince the sceptic of the richness of their phenomenal lives.

First, it is worth noting that most children who are born with this disease die very young, usually within days of being born. However, two of the children in this study lived well into their teens. The main difference between these two sorts of cases is that typically children with this disease are not treated like people. They are treated like vegetables and then they die. However, when they are cared for, touched, spoken to, in a word, loved, these children grow and flourish. They come to express palpable emotional affect that is sensitive to the person of their primary caregiver. They respond with happiness when certain kinds of music are played, they become distraught when their caretaker is absent for an extended period of time. They calm down when this person returns and touches them in a familiar way.

These subjects cannot verbally report and it is true that verbal report is the hallmark of consciousness attribution in the laboratory setting. I am happy to grant that it is a sufficient condition, but report cannot be a necessary condition. I maintain that to deny the capacity of experiencing pleasure and pain, in a word, affectively phenomenally conscious experience, to these subjects is both inaccurate and morally wrong. Look no further to the result of *not* treating them as if they were experience-having persons; it is plausible this is the main reason so many of these patients die so young. I therefore conclude that such subjects are enjoying phenomenally conscious lives.
That being said, there is a substantial question remaining. That is, explaining how hydranencephalic experiences relate to corticated experiences is difficult because these former cases are highly atypical. However, one thing that seems clear from these cases is that there is a certain affective relational structure that is necessary to realize experience in these cases. Without a positive affective tone on the side of the patient — sustained by the dynamic feedback from the trusted caregiver — these patients become completely vegetative.

I hypothesize that in these, and perhaps all cases, phenomenal consciousness is realized primarily and most basically by core emotional and homeodynamic affects (Panksepp 2005; Damasio and Carvalho 2013; Denton 2006). As discussed in chapter 3, core emotional affects are primitive, genetically constrained, affective arousal patterns that are tied to habitual, survival-oriented behavioral scripts. They are feelings that prime instinctual motor responses to a familiar environment. In virtue of feeling the core emotional affect of fear, my perception of my environment would shift and my poisedness for fleeing would be primed in a reflexive way. Homeodynamic affects arise as the result of regulatory processes through which an organism maintains an internal equilibrium in the face of a changing and often hostile environment. Examples we examined previously included the parched sensation in your throat when you are thirsty or the grumbling feeling in your stomach when you are hungry. Both represent a loss of homeodynamic equilibrium.

There are complex exegetical issues surrounding these two forms of affect. Space does not permit me to develop them any further here. However, the basic point is that the living body is hedonically perturbed in different ways and that this is likely the foundation of phenomenal consciousness in hydranencephalic children. This can be seen from considering just how dependent such patients are on a familiar and comfortable environment for mental function. To be sure there is sensory consciousness, including touch, hearing, and some degraded vision. But the increased amount of affective response is the key phenomenon that distinguishes these cases from more ordinary ones.

80 I will have more to say about this in the next section.
Without the biologically basic functioning of these affective processes, our cognitive capacities cannot develop and function (Damasio 1999).

It is a complex matter to relate such cases to the claim that there can be phenomenal consciousness that overflows cognitive access. Hydranencephaly is, after all, something that one is born with, and as such, neuroplasticity plays a significant role in helping to sustain certain cognitive functions that might otherwise be realized by the cortex (Lutz et al. 2007). Nevertheless, from a structural point of view, these kinds of results indicate that there is a core affective basis to mental life that undergirds the cognitive capacities typically realized by the cortical system and that phenomenally conscious states can be realized without the modulating influence of the cortex (Merker 2007, Parvizi 2009). Therefore, it seems like we have good initial reasons to accept the second premise of the argument:

**AO2.** Hydranencephalic patients do not have access consciousness.

If it is the case that there are subjects who have phenomenally conscious experiences but do not have cognitive access, then the latter cannot be part of what it means to be phenomenally conscious. Therefore, the conclusion follows:

**AO-C1.** Phenomenal consciousness is not constituted by access consciousness.

However, as we shall see, things are more complicated than just affirming that these children have phenomenal consciousness on the one hand, and denying that they lack cognitive access on the other. In concluding that cognitive access cannot consistute phenomenal consciousness, we must face two important points. First, these patients have highly atypical mental lives which makes their relation to ordinary cases unclear. Second, these children demonstrate many access-like behaviors. Therefore, in considering some important objections, I will argue that there are multiple forms of access consciousness.
4.3 Two Important Objections

Before, explaining the rest of the argument, I need to consider two important objections that arise at this juncture. The first follows immediately from my considerations of access consciousness at the end of the previous section. The second objection foregrounds an important question about the proper relation between normal and non-normal cases in theorizing about the nature of the mind.

4.3.1 Hydranencephalic Patients have Access-like Capacities

The careful reader will rightly point out that some access-like functions remain in hydranencephalic cases. These include the capacity to distinguish the mother (or other primary caregiver), associative learning (e.g. differential response to preferred music), consolability, conditioning, orienting, and visual tracking (Shewmon et al. 1999, 372). Since this is the case, it might be argued — similar to the claims made by Cohen and Dennett (2011) — that hydranencephalic patients have a lesser degree of cognitive access than ordinary patients, but still exhibit some cognitive access.

We can put this insight into the form of a premise that both my objector and I can endorse. That is:

**AO3.** Hydranencephalic patients have access-like functioning.

If these access-like functions are plausibly construable as examples of cognitive access, then my first conclusion will be falsified. However, if I can defend (AO2), the view that hydranencephalic patients lack cognitive access, then I can interpret (AO3) in a novel way and carry on with my argument. In what follows, I argue that the access-like functioning of hydranencephalic patients should be not understood in terms of cognitive access, but in terms of what I will call ‘affective access’.

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81 Note, that in endorsing this claim I am not committed to a strict cognition vs. emotion distinction in the brain. It has been extensively argued that this kind of approach to neural function is probably a non-starter (Pessoa 2013). I am friendly to the view that all cognition is permeated with affect and that much of our affective lives is robustly cognitive. What I am committed to is the view that the phylogenetic and ontogenetic roots of mental functioning are affective and that these have the capacity to sustain mental life in the absence of more robust cognitive functions.
The access-like capacities of hydranencephalic cases are structurally different from normal functions of cognitive access in corticated humans in two ways. All the access-functions in the hydranencephalic patients are profoundly context-sensitive and affectively biased. By ‘context-sensitivity’ I mean that without very particular contexts (i.e. the presence of the caregiver), little or no interaction with the world is possible. ‘Affective bias’ refers to the way in which one’s capacities for perception and attention rely on bodily affect (Todd et al. 2012). In particular, the capacity of hydranencephalic patients to respond to their world is hugely dependent on physical comfort and the presence of positive reinforcement from trusted caregivers. In the absence of these affective contextual factors, there is very strong negative affective response followed by the quick onset of a non-responsive vegetative state.

Contrast these hydranencephalic access-like functions with the ordinary functions of cognitive access. The canonical description of cognitive access is the following: a mental state $M$ is $A$-conscious if $M$'s content, in virtue of being represented by subject $S$, is poised for use in one or all of the following: as a premise in an inference, in the rational control of action and/or for rational control of speech (Block 1995, 231). The important ideas here are that in ordinary cases of cognitive access, (i) the content of a representation is ‘poised for use’ in different types of actions and (ii) the subject has ‘rational control’ over how the content is expressed through the various channels of output available to them. This capacity is also sometimes described in terms of the subject having ‘free use’ of the content of its access-conscious representations. Content being available for cognitive access is usually prefaced with some qualification of volitional intentionality. When we pay attention, introspect, speak, act or think we do so with a certain degree of freedom. We can choose what to do with the content of our representations (speak, think, act). The subject of cognitive access can select which cognitive pathway to take up as output for the content of its representations.

By contrast, the children under examination in these studies have severe limits on such capacities. The connection between perception and action is constituted by affectively biased reactions rather than reflective responsiveness, as in cases of cognitive access. Another way to put this point is as follows: Hydranencephalic subjects lack a capacity for context-independent information processing.
Context independent cognitive capacities seem better to represent the sort of access consciousness realized by the cortical system. Part of what guides the subject's capacity to select an action for its represented content is a cognitive ability to process information in different ways (i.e. via inference, rational action, or speech), across different contexts. The children under examination in these studies have no such capacities because of their dependence on the caregiver to exercise any and all interactions with their world. Therefore, I can re-construct the third premise of this argument in the following way:

**AO3**. Hydranencephalic patients have access-like functioning that is grounded not in cognition but in core emotional and homeodynamic affects.

The access-like functions of the hydranencephalic children are grounded in our basic capacities for affect rather than cognition. Again, this is not to say that in ordinary cases, our capacity for cognition and affect are not densely integrated (Pessoa 2013). As I already mentioned, outside of a familiar context these children have profoundly negative affect or cease to demonstrate any agency or subjectivity at all, hence the term 'developmental vegetative state' (Shewmon et al. 1999).

Thus, one way to differentiate these two forms of access is in terms of the subject's capacity (or lack thereof) to utilize information in context independent ways (Hurley 1997). In the case of affective access, the connection between experience and action is instinct-driven and affectively biased; in cases of cognitive access, the connection is mediated by rationality and the capacity to choose. Because of this difference, subjects who lack cognitive access but have affective access lack the ability to exercise their mental functioning across contexts. The opposite is true for those who have cognitive access.

From these considerations, we can generate the following conditional inference:

**AO4.** If hydranencephalic patients have access-like functioning that is grounded not in cognition but in core emotional and homeodynamic affects, then phenomenal consciousness does not overflow this affectively grounded access ('affective access').

Given the shape of the argument, it is clear that the conclusion follows:
**AO-C2.** Phenomenal consciousness does not overflow this affectively grounded access (‘affective access’).

The evidence seems sufficient to conclude that there is an important difference between phenomenal consciousness and cognitive access, precisely because there are subjects able to enjoy phenomenally conscious mental lives in the absence of the brain structures necessary to realize cognitive access. Nevertheless, it is plausible that there are no phenomenally conscious states without affective access. Further, it is worth reiterating that the mediating influence that neuroplasticity and development have is significant, especially in these hydranencephalic cases. Thus, a sober and parsimonious conclusion is that phenomenal consciousness is often not cognitively accessed but that in healthy adults, the contents of such states could be accessed, perhaps with the aid of attentional training (cf. Thompson 2015). Importantly, phenomenality and access are physically realized in different ways and remain distinct (but often interacting) forms of consciousness. Finally, while it may be accurate to affirm a moderate endorsement of phenomenal overflow of cognitive access in normal cases, it seems that there is strong inaccessibility in the case of hydranencephalic patients in the case of cognitive access, but of course, not with affective access.

### 4.3.2 On the Relation between the Ordinary and the Non-Ordinary Cases

An important objection remains. Namely that my evidence for the overflow case is so atypical that it tells us nothing useful about the ordinary case. Perhaps in hydranencephalic cases there is phenomenal consciousness without any cognitive access. However, in ordinary cases, these two are never separated. The objection essentially persists in asking for more information about why the pathological case should bear on our considerations of the ordinary case. I will provide some recapitulation of what I have said thus far by way of an initial response and then defer to subsequent work where I will articulate a positive proposal about how core bodily affect constitutes a special connection between experience and environmental responsiveness.

What the pathological cases do show is that cognitive access cannot constitute phenomenal consciousness because there are cases of phenomenal consciousness without cognitive access. It is consistent with this view that, in ordinary cases, the content of our experience is *accessible*, though
not always accessed. I am happy to endorse such a view, as I do not think it threatens the main insight, which is that our experience is not the product only of our capacities for intentional response and cognition, but also by our capacities to be affected in certain ways. There is a view in the neurosciences that cognition and emotion are deeply integrated in the normally functioning brain (Pessoa 2013). Perhaps this dynamically integrated functioning of the normal human brain precludes any meaningful insight into the structure of consciousness and affect from extreme pathological cases. I do not think this is the case.

I am happy to grant that in normal cases, experience is realized by a dynamically integrated neural structure that depends on a body and a world. The point is that different parts of the brain, however integrated, contribute different aspects to our experience. It is just not the case that phenomenally conscious experience is constituted by a cortical network that sits on top of an otherwise unconscious information processing system. However holistic the brain may be in its functioning capacities, it also is highly plastic and exhibits some degree of modularity. This is why hydranencephalic patients are able to live without a cortex, after all. The proposal is a relatively straightforward one. Our mid-brain and brain stem contribute to experience and they do so in both pathological and non-pathological cases. The cortex grants the human brain a number of amazing capacities like language, and higher-order thought, but the capacity to have experience is not one of them. Just because the cortical network recruits the lower parts of the brain into a holistic network that realizes experience in the normal case, does not mean that the lower brain does not contribute a substantial amount to the realization of those experiences in both normal and non-normal cases.

Given these points, I think that to maintain the objection is a bit shortsighted. I think we have every reason to think that experiences go beyond what we can think, that our experiences have a kind of affective depth that is grounded in pre-cortical circuits of the brain, and that this layer of phenomenology is worth exploring further in terms of the kinds of motivational and organizational role such affective experiences might have on our ordinary mental functions, especially attention and perception. By focusing on the affective structure of phenomenal experience, we have resources for thinking about the way that phenomenal consciousness plays a role in our mental lives.
**Conclusion**

The preceding discussion has established that there is an important difference between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. At the most general level, I want my account to function as a cautious endorsement of Block's (2007) use of this distinction in trying to examine phenomenal consciousness empirically against those theorists who think there can be no meaningful distinction between these two forms of consciousness (Cohen and Dennett 2011). I have approached this conclusion by a different route than is common in this debate. The persistent emphasis on vision and verbal reports makes it difficult to escape the explanatory circle between verbal report and phenomenally conscious states.

In my own case, I have tried to show that there is compelling evidence that phenomenal consciousness is realized by brain and body structures that exist below the threshold of cortical function. This presents a substantial challenge to the global workspace theory, which is both an empirical theory about how cognitive access is physiologically realized, and a metaphysical thesis which claims that cognitive access is necessary (for some sufficient), for phenomenal consciousness. The lower brain systems realize an essentially affective mental life that does not require higher cognitive function in order for there to be something it is like to be in such states. Our capacity to feel our own bodies and experience affect is sufficient to realize phenomenally conscious states, often in the absence of cognitive access.
PART II: Cross-Cultural Philosophy and the Epistemic Role of Consciousness
5 Affect and the Epistemic Role of Consciousness

Using sweeping terms and ignoring exceptions, we might say that every possible feeling produces a movement, and that the movement is a movement of the entire organism, and of each and all its parts.


Introduction

In this second part of the dissertation, my aim is to amplify and substantiate some points that I have been developing in part I, especially in the fourth chapter. Specifically, I will explain what I take to be a tight causal connection between our phylogenetically basic experiences of bodily affect, on the one hand, and our capacities for environmental responsiveness, on the other. This is premise IV of the master argument. In the last chapter I spoke of this connection in terms of ‘affective access’. I will develop this point in some detail in the current chapter by looking at how several different sorts of philosophers have thought of this problem, including William James and the Theravādin Buddhists. Substantiating this connection will be the task of this and the chapters that follow.

The motivation for switching gears and considering the work of thinkers like William James and the Indian Buddhist philosophers requires some explanation. William James’s work in the *Principles of Psychology* and the Indian Buddhist views of mental functioning are united in their conviction that the mind is at its base an affective phenomenon. James’s theory of habit formation and the Buddhist views about affective layers in the mind represent a powerful conceptual contribution to the view of affective subjectivity I have been developing. The presence of James in this discussion should come as no surprise as large swaths of contemporary discourse on affect in both science (Damasio 1999) and philosophy (Prinz 2006) owe a widely-acknowledged debt to James. Thus, in what follows I will expand his sphere of influence somewhat by showing how his thinking on emotion ought to be thought of as applying more widely to consciousness itself.

In this chapter, and the ones that remain, I will show how the views of James and the Indian Buddhists will furnish us with the necessary conceptual architecture to make good on the second
explanatory upshot that the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character offers. Recall from chapter 4 that the first is a novel way of substantiating the phenomenal overflow thesis. The second is to furnish consciousness with an explanatory role in a theory of mind. That explanatory role is epistemic in that consciousness provides the organism that lives through it with a kind of knowledge it could not get in its absence.

The main argument for the next four chapters is called the ‘Argument for Affective Action’. It looks like this:

**AA1.** The phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment.

**AA2.** If the phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment, then phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

**AA-C1.** Phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

**AA-C2.** Phenomenal character is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

In this chapter I reconstruct James’s view on bodily affect and habitual action. I take this reconstruction to embody a phenomenological argument that gives us reason to endorse (AA1) and some preliminary considerations for accepting (AA2). In chapter 6 and 7, I explore Buddhist accounts of how the mind is affectively layered and how this affective layering impacts our most basic kind of conscious sentience. This foray into the details of the Buddhist philosophical lifeworld will furnish the Neo-Jamesean account I will develop in this chapter with the necessary resources to substantiate the rest of the argument for affective action (AA2). The first conclusion of (AA) is equivalent to the fourth premise of the master argument, (AA-C2) is the second conclusion of the master argument. Finally, I return to this argument in chapter 8. There I will offer more arguments for (AA2).

Before arguing for (AA1), in §5.1 I set up the problem of thinking about consciousness and action by looking at what John Campbell (2002; 2004; 2011) and others (Smithies 2011; Roessler 2009) have said about the epistemic role of consciousness, that is, about the way in which consciousness helps us to know things about the world. Most discussions of how consciousness
contributes to our store of knowledge focus on propositional knowledge. I recast the problem in terms of practical knowledge. Then, in §5.2, I argue for the first premise of the main argument by looking at the views of William James in his Principles of Psychology. In §5.3 I analyze a discussion in the Indian Buddhist texts regarding our habitual reactions to affect. Understanding the Buddhist view on reaction to affect will be helpful in resolving a problem inherent in the Jamesean view of affective access, namely, the problem of how to think about how affect might organize action and environmental response both explicitly and implicitly while still being phenomenal. Finally, in §5.4 I will offer some arguments in favor of (AA2). As I mentioned, I will supplement this argument with further support in chapter 8.

5.1 Two Paths from Perception to Action

In the last chapter, we considered the phenomenal overflow thesis, the view that the phenomenal character of our experiences can and often does eclipse our capacities for cognitive access. If we have experiences, and their contents are not taken up into the architecture of cognitive processing, then a worry arises that those experiences have nothing to do. In an important commentary on Block’s (2007) article on this question, Andy Clark and Julian Kiverstein object that, "...any putative conscious experience should be the experience of an agent. The thought here is that we cannot make sense of the image of free-floating experiences of isolated islets of experience that are not even potentially available as fodder for creatures’ rational choices and considered actions" (Clark and Kiverstein 2007; 502). In the absence of any integration into an agent’s rational capacities, phenomenal characters become nomological danglers (Smart 1959) and thus start to cry out for reduction or elimination.

By making a distinction between cognitive access and affective access, it is possible to avoid this worry while paying heed to the plausibility of the overflow thesis, that is, without over-intellectualizing our experience and turning its contents into a by-product of cognitive processing. If we understand that there are in fact two kinds of access rather than just one, then we can understand how ‘floating experiences’ in the absence of cognitive access might still be understood as states of a subject who can react to its environment in virtue of having them. Such overflowing experiences inhere in a subject whose capacities for action are largely determined by phylogenetic habit formation rather
than rational deliberation. In chapter 4, we examined this possibility in terms of non-standard cases of subjects with hydranencephaly. Here I develop this account of affective access in a more general way that will illuminate the way in which experience feeds our knowledge to facilitate a kind of instinctive reaction to our world.

5.1.1 The Epistemic Role of Consciousness

Before offering the details of the positive proposal, I want to situate my explanation in a discussion that has been ongoing in the contemporary literature on consciousness and perception regarding the explanatory role of consciousness for propositional knowledge.

We regard perception as a distinctive avenue for acquiring knowledge about the world. That one has seen something is good (though defeasible) evidence that such a thing is as it seems to be when one saw it (Roessler 2009). Slightly more precisely and strongly, it is plausible that being phenomenally conscious of an object is a necessary condition for being able to demonstrably refer to that object. If I haven’t experienced the object as seeming a certain way to me then I am not in a position to refer to it as that object (Campbell 2002). Furthermore, some philosophers claim that it is also necessary that one attend to the object while being phenomenally conscious of it (Smithies 2011). Here’s a canonical example: imagine we are standing in a crowded room and you say, “Look at how attractive that person is over there.” You point to the far end of the room and I take in a scene of many people, well-dressed, and looking rather marvelous. “Which one?” I reply, “They are all attractive.” You reply: “That one there,” and pointing at someone in a three-piece grey pinstripe suit, you say, “the one with the pinstripe suit.” “OH! That one, sure, yes, very attractive, indeed.” What it took for me to have my ‘AHA!’ moment here was to have an attentionally foregrounded phenomenally conscious experience of the well-suited party-goer. Only then was I able to co-refer with you to them using the demonstrative ‘that’ (Campbell 2002). The motivation for this view is that it is plausible that I am phenomenally conscious of many aspects of what is happening around me while I am talking with you in the room but that I don’t gain the capacity to think clearly about that person or object until I manage to foreground it in my experience with my attention.
I think that this picture is basically correct and I won’t spend any time defending it. However, this account, as it stands, doesn’t help us as much as we need it to because the focus here is on the way that phenomenal consciousness in visual perception interfaces with our cognitive capacities, what Tyler Burge (2010) calls the ‘upper border’ of perception. The so-called ‘lower border’ is the one where perception provides contentful input for our skillful action. By perceiving something, I gain information about it which in turn empowers me to act on it in various ways. This is the more interesting border of perception because it is far more phylogenetically basic. Many organisms exercise the capacity to act in virtue of perceiving the world, but not many are able to demonstrably refer to the world in virtue of perceiving it. Even if phenomenal consciousness is necessary for demonstrative reference, that is still a long shot to providing an account of what consciousness does, more generally, not just what it does for organisms who have a sophisticated ability to demonstratively refer to particulars in virtue of perceiving them as seeming a certain way. Thus, the question we must address is whether or not it is plausible that the kind of perception that provides content for the organism to act on is phenomenally conscious or not.

Another way of putting this problem is by distinguishing between two forms of knowledge. Call the first kind ‘knowing that’ and the second ‘knowing how’. Many creatures have experiences of knowing how to do something practical like how to flee when they are being pursued by a predator. Far fewer creatures have knowledge of the fact that it is the case that a predator is chasing them. To have knowledge of the latter sort would require the ability to entertain propositional attitudes and to be able to utilize concepts in a compositional way.\footnote{See chapter 3, §3.1.3 for more on this.} Thus, in what follows, in explaining the epistemic role of consciousness in a phylogenetically inclusive way, I will be referring to the knowledge that phenomenally conscious experience affords in terms of knowing how and not knowing that.

A straightforward way of bringing phenomenal consciousness into a more phylogenetically basic picture regarding how perception and action interact is to claim that it is in virtue of perceiving
the world consciously that a subject has knowledge of its surroundings and can act in response to what it knows about its environment. This knowledge need not be propositional. We don’t need to know *facts* about the world to act on it; we only need to know what is required of us and how to respond. By being conscious of the world I know *what* it is like to see the world from my point of view, and then I can figure out *how* to react to it. John Campbell (2004) calls this view the ‘how-to-do-it’ view of experience and he thinks it is false. Instead, he argues that something called the ‘what-it-is’ conception is better suited for the job of explaining the epistemological import of conscious experience. I defend a version of the how-to-do-it conception of how consciousness connects to action by suggesting that William James’s view gives us reason to think that there is not as much distance between that view and the one Campbell proposes to replace it with.

### 5.1.2 How-to-do-it vs. What-it-is

The problem with the how-to-do-it view of consciousness is that there seems to be a lot of examples of, “...people finding out about their surroundings on the basis of perception, and moving and acting successfully in their environments, without the benefit of experience of their surroundings” (Campbell 2004).\(^8\) The main example here is blindsight. Patients with this disorder often claim not to be able to see anything in parts of their visual field but still manage to perform well above chance at all kinds of practical tasks that demand that they make use of visual information from that part of the field they claim to have no experience of. Thus, Campbell proposes that, “...we should think of the role of experience of objects as being to define the targets of brain processing” (ibid). Thus, what experience provides that a blindsighter lacks is a way of targeting certain aspects of the environment which can then trigger the kind of brain processing that allows for practical action, practical action that is supposedly shared by the non–phenomenally conscious blindsighted patient.

Let’s consider a positive example of how experience facilitates the targeting of objects for subsequent neural processing, one that both views under examination here could endorse. Consider a

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\(^8\) For a more thorough review of the empirical studies that motivate these kinds of attitudes, see Goodale and Milner (2005).
baseball player in the outfield. When a batter hits the ball to their section of the field, it is their conscious attention to the ball, as it flies through the air, that primes them to respond by catching it. On the ‘what it is’ view, conscious attention to the fly-ball selects the object on the basis of a visible property of it and this then causes subsequent un-phenomenally-conscious sensorimotor processing that facilitates the actions necessary on the part of the fielder to catch the ball. The problem here is that when you start to consider the role that bodily feeling plays in facilitating skillful action in these scenarios, the barrier between these two views starts to erode.

The problem with Campbell’s view is that he concedes too much to the exceptional case, in this example, the blindsighter. For Campbell, conscious experience simply defines the target of your action but tells you nothing about how to act with respect to it; all that is done unconsciously. But this can’t be right. Consider the baseball player once more. When they see the ball coming to their territory, the outfielder experiences a whole host of bodily affects that prime them to act. Their muscles tense up, their pulse quickens. These things are felt and help orient the fielder’s attention so that when the moment is right, they can start to run to make sure they are under the ball as it starts to descend. The continued tracking of the ball while they move is happening in conjunction with the felt sense of agency and affect that comes with skillfully negotiating a familiar affordance landscape like a baseball field, a grocery store, or driving a vehicle.

In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty makes this exact point. Consider the following:

For the player in action the football field is not an ‘object’, that is, the ideal term which can give rise to a multiplicity of perspectival views and remain equivalent under its apparent transformations. It is pervaded with lines of force (the ‘yard lines’; those which demarcate

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84 Notice that if a blindsighter were in the position of the sighted outfielder, they would stand a good chance of enduring a serious head injury. What the blindsighter lacks in such a case is an ability to deal with novel stimuli entering their field of perception and the capacity to react to those stimuli as they become a more proximal threat to their stability or success.

85 Campbell (2011) makes an important claim that there is a difference between selecting on object on the basis of a perceivable property and having access to that property as a property of that object. He thinks that experience enters the discussion of providing knowledge of an object at the level of selection, not at the level of access. I follow him in this.
the penalty area) and articulated in sectors (for example, the 'openings' between the
daughters which call for a certain mode of action and which initiate and guide the action
as if the player were unaware of it. The field itself is not given to him, but present as the
immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the
direction of the goal, for example just as immediately as the vertical and horizontal planes
of his own body. It would not be sufficient to say that consciousness inhabits this milieu. At
this moment consciousness is nothing other than the dialectic of milieu and action. Each
maneuver undertaken by the player modifies the character of the field and establishes in it new lines of
force in which the action in turn unfolds and is accomplished, again altering the phenomenal
field.

(Merleau-Ponty 1942/1967, 168-9)

The phenomenal field, or the world of perception, is something inhabited by the subject and is viewed
by them as seeming a certain way because of the contextual demands for their reaction to what is
happening. The baseball field seems a certain way to the fielder depending on whether they are
preparing to take a fly-ball or whether their pitcher is consistently striking out their opponent's batters.
The world shows up for us a shot through with norms that affect our ways of interacting with those
parts of it that are salient for us. By contrast, embedded in Campbell’s approach to the epistemic role
of experience is the idea that what shows up for us when we attend to an object is the object as a
categorical basis for any dispositional properties it might have (Campbell 2002; 2004). What this
means is that we target the object as a kind of thing, but we don’t consciously perceive it as affording
us anything. All perceptions of what an object affords us is processed unconsciously.

5.1.3 The Normativity of Perception

Campbell is clearly wrong about this. If the above example has not convinced you of this, then consider
the following remark from The Phenomenology of Perception (1962/2012). There Merleau-Ponty
writes, “The distance between me and the object is not a size that increases or decreases, but rather a
tension that oscillates around a norm. The oblique orientation of the object in relation to me is not
measured by the angle that it forms with the plane of my face, but rather experienced as a
disequilibrium, as an unequal distribution of its influences upon me” (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012; 316).
The reason there is disequilibrium when an object is experienced obliquely is that perception of an
object is normatively constrained for perceiving it in maximal relief. This norm is revealed to me in the way my body has an ‘optimal attitude’ it aims for in perceiving an object. As Sean Kelly puts it, “Every experience of size or shape is not just the perceptual representation of a property. Rather, the experience already involves a kind of normative self-referentiality: It is part of the very experience of the size of an object that I am drawn to improve the experience by changing my distance to the object.” (Kelly, 2007; 149). This notion of self-referentiality can be explained in terms of the embodied subject’s sense of what it would take for them to move so as to change the object’s profile and their perspective on it such that a new movement-resultant perspective would be maximized so that the subject can see the object’s size and shape.

Kelly’s argument for this view is the following (2007; 150 ff): a subject is presented with a square in an angled way such that it has the appearance of a trapezoid. The subject is not fooled into thinking that the square is a trapezoid – she understands that what is presented is a square – she just sees that this square is presented such that the angle of relief makes it appear somewhat trapezoidal. Now, the square would certainly look squarer if it was seen face on rather than at a trapezoidal angle. The claim is that in order to see the square as a square, the subject must know that to look at it face on would give a better view of the square then to look at it at a trapezoidal angle. Kelly asks, “...can we imagine a subject who experiences her view of the squareness of the thing to be getting better when she turns the object in such a way that it projects a more and more trapezoidal image onto her retina? This seems impossible” (ibid). What would it take for the subject to know this? It would take her having a sense of how her body must move or of how the object must move relative to her current position such that the maximal relief of the square is revealed through a face-on perception of it. Crucially, the subject would have a sense of this as an embodied subject for whom the maximization of the perception is facilitated through the active movement of the body or a sense of where the body is as a perceiver, such that the movement of the object would maximize the perception for her. Such knowledge is constitutive of perceiving the square as a square. “I would not count as seeing the object to be square if it were part of my experience that the shape before me was better seen by rotating it in what, objectively speaking, is the direction that projects increasingly trapezoidal images.” (Kelly, 2007; 151).
This view amounts to the idea that perception of an object situates our perspective on that object along a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum there is the object as viewed from an extremely oblique angle; at such an angle, shape constancy fails and our point of view on what the shape is becomes distorted. At the other end of the spectrum is a perfect head-on view of the shape. The norm that constrains perception of shape is that in seeing a shape from a somewhat off-centre point of view, we understand what it would take to avoid the extreme of constancy failure on one hand and to aim at a minimally distorted point of view of the object on the other. Therefore, I don’t think that there is much distance between the ‘what it is’ view and the ‘how to do it’ view, because what it takes to select for something with perceptual attention already incorporates an organism’s situation and reactive abilities with respect to that which is perceived.

However, there is another layer here worth considering. There are two ways in which experiences can furnish us with targets in virtue of which we come to know how to do things with respect to those objects. The one we have been focusing on involves the endogenous deployment of conscious attention to furnish ourselves with goals that then prime our intentional actions. It is all well and good to say that experience plays a role here in furnishing us with targets. However, the problem with this is that our understanding of the role experience plays in scenarios involving endogenous attention is at best indirect. Such understanding is indirect because experience in these scenarios is tied up too closely with intentional action, that is, with cognitive access. If we want to say something about the truly distinctive explanatory role of experience in our mental life, we must do so in a way that does not specify experience’s contribution to our store of practical knowledge in terms of the functions of cognitive access. To do so invites the objection that tis is cognitive access and not phenomenal consciousness that ids doing the work of furnishing us with knowledge.

The second way that we can talk of experience furnishing us with targets has to do with fluid reactions that are not explicitly intentional. For example, if you say to me ‘HEY!’ and then throw a ball to me, there stands a good chance that I will automatically try to catch it without forming an explicit intention to do so. If we claim that my experience of your verbal prime and my visual experience of your throwing the ball to me is the cause of my catching response, then it is open to the objector to say
that a subject who lacks phenomenal consciousness but has cognitive access would be in a similar position as our subject (e.g. a super-blindsight, perhaps) (Siewert 1997). Thus, following on from some thoughts I developed in chapter 4, I will provide an explanation of how experience furnishes us with targets that trigger phylogenetically basic affective responses like approach and avoid behavior in ways that go beyond our capacities to process the contents of our experiences through the functions of cognitive access. In addition to cognitive access we also have the ability to deal with the world through our capacity for what I have been calling ‘affective access’. That is, we have the ability to act in a fluid non-cognitive way in response to the world. We do this by reacting to affective primes in the body that arise as a result of perception.

5.2 William James on Affect and the Deep Structure of the Mind

Our experience of the world is not always something active that we achieve by deploying our attention endogenously. Often, the world just shows up for us, sometimes in explicitly frightening ways. However, between these more punctuated kinds of startling events, the world is always impacting us in subtle ways, creating microdynamic variations of embodied affect that arise and pass away in response to those perturbations. In virtue of being constantly affectively perturbed by the world, we develop the ability to react in a fluid, instinctual way.

By ‘instinct’ I mean something both colloquial and technical. Colloquially speaking, an instinctive reaction is one that happens naturally, fluidly, in response to some affective prime within the framework of the body. Such actions happen without any self-conscious intention on the part of the acting subject. The technical definition builds from this and I will explain those details below when I get into the heart of William James’ views on these matters. For now, it is enough to say that understanding the way felt bodily affect motivates fluid action will provide us with an avenue for explaining the epistemic role of consciousness. Further, this analysis will be developed in such a way that it can be applied to non-human organisms that seem to have experience but might lack the

86 The following section is adapted from the first section of Smith and Thompson (2015). See also, Miskovic et al. (2015).
capacities of cognitive access. This approach has the benefit of not begging the question against those who would rather focus such an explanation on the nature of cognitive access rather than phenomenal consciousness.

5.2.1 A Neo-Jamesean Theory of Embodiment

Thus far, the thought of William James has figured only as a background condition for the work I have done in this dissertation. I will now bring his work directly into the discussion, in particular, his views about the way in which affective experience predisposes us to respond to our environment. My aim is to show that there are situations in which the experience of embodied affect is a necessary condition for action and that in the absence of such feelings, their accompanying actions would not be deployed. In this way, exogenously recruited perceptual attention furnishes us with affectively salient targets that trigger fluid behavioral responses that take the affective input as a necessary condition for their context sensitive execution. On this view, what experience provides is a kind of sensitivity to novel affectively salient stimuli and the engagement of a habitual behavioral repertoire in response to those stimuli.

Let’s look at a straightforward example. Consider the case of pain. When a child touches a heated element of a stove for the first time, that one experience is enough to condition all subsequent behavior. The felt bodily affect of pain in the extremity of the hand provides such visceral feedback, that the subject avoids exposing themselves to any such element in the future, or at least makes sure they have protection if context demands proximity to such a heat source. It is true that a pain asymbolic subject might expose themselves to the element and feel no pain, or at least nothing aversive that makes them recoil the way an ordinary subject might recoil. Nevertheless, upon inspecting the severe burns they will have acquired having not had the initial prime to remove their hand, they might form a similar intention to avoid such elements in the future. The subject who cannot feel pain knows to avoid open heat sources for a different reason than the normal subject. The asymbolia patient must be far more careful than the normal subject because they lack the aversive affective primes that motivate the instinctive withdrawal response. This is the tight causal connection that bodily affect provides between experience and action. In the absence of this bodily motivation, having learned about the damage the burns have done to me by vision (and perhaps smell), I form a conscious intention to avoid
those things in the future, but my responsiveness to similar threats that I might encounter subsequently will be a matter of careful attention rather than instinctive response to my feelings.

I have been at pains to argue that our capacity to feel what’s going on inside our bodies has a direct impact on our capacity to fluidly respond to our environment. This idea is prefigured in the early chapters of William James’s *magnum opus, The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1950). Although James’s influence on contemporary scientific and philosophical discussions about the mind is well acknowledged, most of this recognition is focused on his work on emotion, attention, and for his coining of the notion of a ‘stream of consciousness’. However, James is also very much an embodied mind theorist and I hope to recover some of the sophistication of his thinking on primordial forms of consciousness in what follows.

Consider the following remark from the opening chapter of the *Principles of Psychology*:

Mental phenomena are not only conditioned *a parte ante* by bodily processes; but they lead to them *a parte post*. That they lead to *acts* is of course the most familiar of truths, but I do not merely mean acts in the sense of voluntary and deliberate muscular performances. Mental states occasion also changes in the calibre of blood-vessels, or alternation in the heartbeats, or processes more subtle still, in glands and viscera. If these are taken into account, . . . it will be safe to lay down the general law that *no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change*.

(James 1890/1950 Vol. I, 5)

First, note, that this is not behaviorism. James’s point is not that our experience is nothing but changes in the body. His point is that our bodies are ‘sensibly alive’. We live through being embodied in a way that is far more thorough than we often recognize. Thus, subtle changes in the body have a phenomenal upshot. I have already argued for this view in chapter 3. I assume it as a background here. Now I want to develop the argument further by thinking more about how the subtle feelings that animate the lived body orient us to be responsive to our lived worlds.
5.2.2  *Bill’s Frog and the Ejective Mind*

Having provided a general outline of James’s views on how the feeling body relates to experience, I will now utilize the details of this position to provide an argument in favor of the first premise of the argument for affective access. The first premise, recall, is the following:

**AA1.** The phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment.

In the second chapter of the *Principles* titled “The Functions of the Brain,” James suggests that different centers in the brain and even the spine may have glimmerings of consciousness tied to preferential responses to feeling in the body (James, 1890/1950, 65–66, 78). His motivations for this view come from considering the differential responses of decerebrated frogs to aversive stimulation. James points out that if the right knee of a headless frog is exposed to acid, then the right foot will respond by attempting to wipe off the offending chemical. However, if the right foot is then amputated, thus preventing the initial reaction to repeat, the left leg will attempt to remove the acid (James 1890/1950, 9). Bracketing for the moment, the wanton cruelty of such a procedure, there are two ways one might draw out inferences based on such evidence. One would be to say that there are glimmers of affective consciousness in the body of the frog’s spinal column, even without the modulating influence of the brain, or one might say that the body is capable of a kind of non-conscious pseudo-affective reflex that has no experiential component to it at all.

Given the differential aversive response to the bodily stimulus, I am inclined towards the former hypothesis rather than the latter. James was too. The reasoning is straightforward. If the differential response to the acid was a mere non-conscious reflex, one would expect the frog’s right stump, post amputation, to continue trying, and failing, to scratch off the acid. However, since the subsequent engagement of the left leg seems to represent an aversive affective reaction to remove the threat by whatever means are available, this suggests that the felt disturbance of the acid on the skin is motivating a reaction that is sensitive to the threat *qua* threat, thus further suggesting that some
sort of phylogenetically basic pain aversive phenomenal bodily self-consciousness is playing a role in facilitating the reaction.

Because of this evidence, James devoted serious consideration to the possibility that what such experiments reveal is not ‘pseudoaffective reflexes’ without any experience of feeling, but rather a more primitive form of consciousness that remains present even in the absence of central nervous system functioning. Although James subsequently confines his discussion of consciousness to the ‘personal self of the individual’ and to the cortex (James, 1890/1950, 66), he indicates that he does so for “practical purposes” (ibid.) This is because James thinks that more primitive forms of consciousness and their physiological substrates remain outside the scope of introspection. However, the progress in affective neuroscience means that we do not have to confine our analysis of the relation between consciousness and brain function to the cortex alone. Therefore, in the next section I will develop an account of how the mind can be thought of as affectively deep.

5.2.3 On the Affective Depth of the Mind

We respond to the world in different ways. Some of our actions are highly intentional and explicitly goal-oriented. Some of them are reflex-like and automatic. As opposing as these kinds of actions are, it is important to note that they exist on a spectrum and that nothing is fixed on that spectrum. As James points out: “...actions originally prompted by conscious intelligence may grow so automatic by dint of habit as to be apparently unconsciously performed. Standing, walking, buttoning and unbuttoning, piano-playing, talking, even saying one’s prayers, may be done when the mind is absorbed in other things” (James 1890/1950 Vol. I, 5). Further, “...the animal’s reflex and voluntary performances shade into each other gradually, being connected by acts which may often occur automatically, but may also be modified by conscious intelligence” (ibid., 13). We have a vast repertoire for fluid action responses, but that our conscious intentions are always able to modify and intervene

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87 James’s consideration of this possibility can be seen as anticipating contemporary discussions of the “corticocentric myopia” (Parvizi, 2009) in views of brain function as well as the possibility of “consciousness without a cerebral cortex” (Merker, 2007). For more, see chapter 4.
when and as necessary. But this raises the question as to how some responses become reflex-like and automatic and which do not.

James’s hypothesis for answering this last question is intriguing. Put in neurophysiological terms, James suggests that, “All nervous centres have then in the first instance one essential function, that of ‘intelligent’ action. They feel, prefer one thing to another, and have ‘ends”’ (ibid. 79). However, as species grow and evolve they become more adapted to their milieu. As this process of adaptation becomes more successful, aspects of the organism’s behavioral repertoire become more habitual and less volitional. Thus, we see that there are two paths towards action, one that is more automatic and reflex-like, and one that remains volitional, explicitly self-conscious and in James’s terms, ‘intellectual’:

Thus it may happen that those functions which can safely grow uniform and fatal become least accompanied by mind, and their organ, the spinal cord, becomes a more and more soulless machine; whilst on the contrary those functions which it benefits the animal to have adapted to delicate environing variations pass more and more to the hemispheres, whose anatomical structure and attendant consciousness grow more and more elaborate as zoological evolution proceeds (ibid).

It is important to note here that James’s insistence on referring to the more primordial aspects of our environmental responsiveness as ‘soulless’ is for practical reasons, practical reasons we can now overcome.

To get clear about what it might mean for the mind to have affective depth, it is worth noting an immediate objection. Isn’t it the case that our fluid capacity to interface with the world is an unconscious ability? Surely the fluidly integrated blindsight patient lacks phenomenal awareness but would still count as having the kind of responsiveness I am trying to tie to affectively embodied experience? My response to this objection is to point out that there is something the blindsight patient lacks which the normally sighted person possesses, and there is something both share that is important is well. What the blindsight patient lacks is the ability to integrate novel and threatening stimuli into their reactive behavioral repertoire. This is why a blindsighter would struggle as a left-fielder.
However, the blindsighter only really lacks the ability to spontaneously attend to novel stimuli in their visual field; they are phenomenally conscious in many other ways. Importantly, the blindsighter has a feeling body with which they maintain an orientation to their surroundings. Because of this, I remain unconvinced that the blindsight cases constitute a devastating objection to the so-called ‘how-to-do-it’ conception of experience.

It is not that our capacity to fluidly respond to the world is the work of an unconscious mechanism; it is that the phenomenological aspects of that process of worldly apprehension and response are ‘ejective’ (ibid. 65-6). Things become ‘ejective’ or outside the ordinary scope of our capacities for introspection and attention because our concern with the world is always developing and recruiting finite information processing resources. As we become more accomplished at some set of tasks, we develop interest and absorption in others. Being finite creatures, those things which do not require attention to be done well, go, more often than not, unattended. Nevertheless, for James, ...every one of the bodily changes, whatsoever it be, is FELT, acutely or obscurely, the moment it occurs (James 1890/1950 Vol. II, 451). So, it is best to read this idea of the ejective sector of the mind as a function of the mind’s attentional selection capacities and its knowledge of its own success in certain domains. The energy of intention, volition, and attention is only deployed for those things which require it. Those that do not, sink back into the habitual set of fluid actions that animate and constitute our everyday absorbed pre-reflective stream of embodied experience.

We now have a Jamesean way of making the distinction between affective and cognitive access. Affective access is the kind of access to contents we have in virtue of being affectively perturbed by the world and reacting to that perturbation in a way that is directly primed or motivated by that felt affect. By contrast, cognitive access here is the kind of access to contents we have when we take up the content of our experience in an explicitly intentional way and use our capacities for deliberation to select for output pathways that utilize our abilities in way that correspond to our goals in light of the context by which those contents are delivered. However, as James rightly notes, these two kinds of intelligence are deeply connected in the concrete context where we respond to our world. The outfielder remains an important example of this interconnection. Their capacity to catch the fly-ball relies both on deeply
entrained habitual responses and a careful attentional vigilance that selects a target whose proper apprehension releases the habitual response in a context sensitive way.

Before moving on, let me note another potential objection. It might be claimed that I have not given sufficient reason to think of our capacity to react to affective primes as a form of access. Why not just think of this capacity as a perturbational process? After all, the notion of ‘access’ brings with it the idea that there are contents that are used by the system as a whole, hence the need for the theoretical architecture of a global workspace (Baars 1997; Shannahan and Baars 2007). To this I would respond that the organism is making use of contents when it responds in a fluid and automatic way to affective primes in the body caused by perception. But the means it deploys to carry out this usage are different from the sorts utilized by a system capable of cognitive access. The difference consists in the presence of an intention in the case of cognitive access and the absence of one in the case of affective access. Indeed, depending on how the neuroscience pans out, I would be happy to think of the physiological underpinnings of our capacities for affective access in terms of a global workspace. What matters at this juncture is that the utility of continuing to use the notion of ‘access’ here is to emphasize that what both cognitive and affective access exemplify is that organisms like humans have different sorts of capacities for taking up with the content of their experience, ones that engage the cognitive resources of intention setting and ones that recruit deeply habitual response patterns that can be triggered in the absence of an explicit intention. However, it is important to note, that the two often work together, as in the case of the outfielder.

I have now provided some reasons for endorsing the first premise of the argument for affective access. Being affectively perturbed by our environment provides us with an orientation by which we either reflexively or volitionally respond to such perturbances.

5.3 Ignoring our Feelings

One reason that it is easy for the ‘what it is’ theorist to neglect bodily affect is that most people do so in ‘real life’. We don’t often realize how much the feelings in our body are playing a role in organizing our habits of attention, not to mention what we end up saying and doing in response to them. Part of
the reason that we tend not to be heedful of this affective halo of bodily experience is because it is difficult to live through. Contrary to John Mayer’s problematic and popular assertion, the body is not a wonderland, it is a furnace of suffering. This might seem like a hyperbolic remark, but I intend to show that the Buddhist philosophers give us good reason to think it is true.

The Buddhist philosophical tradition offers a systematic and plausible account of existential angst grounded in our capacity to be constantly hedonically perturbed. We are always being affected and our deepest habit is to react to those perturbations in a host of subtle and not so subtle ways. The process of affection (vedanā), categorization thereof (saññā) and reaction (saṅkhāra) forms a deeply ingrained habit of appropriation (upādāna) whereby we develop craving (tanḍhā) for what is pleasant (sukha), aversion to what is painful (dukkha) (DN II 55). This appropriation process is a constant source of duress (SN V 420).

Consider the case of homeodynamic affect that has preoccupied us in the first part of the dissertation. Recall that homeodynamic affects are the feelings that we experience in the body that are tied up with our need to maintain equilibrium with our world, things like thirst, hunger, the need to expunge waste, and the relatively neutral feeling of being alive (Damasio 1999; Thompson 2007). At every moment of your life, the living body is engaged in a process of self-regulation. This process is happening in constant reaction to the world and generating an ocean of subtle feelings that animate the lived body. Living through these feelings is difficult because they are incessant and constantly changing. When a pleasant feeling arises, we want it to stay, it never does. When an unpleasant feeling arises, we want it to subside, but it rarely does so in conjunction with our desire. These reactions aggregate into a deep and pervasive sense of unease and agitation. This is what the Buddhist philosophers call dukkha. It is easier to ignore all the changes happening in the body and how those are constantly conditioning our experience and instead focus on the unity of the world that is delivered to us through experience. As James explains:

We feel things differently according as we are sleepy or awake, hungry or full, fresh or tired; differently at night and in the morning, differently in summer and in winter, and above all things differently in childhood, [adulthood], and old age. Yet we never doubt that our feelings
reveal the same world, with the same sensible qualities and the same sensible things occupying it. The difference of the sensibility is shown best by the difference of our emotion about the things from one age to another, or when we are in different organic moods. What was bright and exciting becomes weary, flat, and unprofitable. The bird’s song is tedious, the breeze is mournful, the sky is sad.

(ibid Vol. I, 232)

Thus, there is an intelligence in our neglect of the affective frame by which the world is delivered to us. The affective landscape is a rollercoaster. It is often more comfortable to let it take us where it will, outside the scope of our explicit attention. This comfort is short-lived however and comes at the cost of self-control and the discipline necessary to negotiate our own feelings and those of others with skill, poise, and the necessary levels of heedfulness.

This point has been made with precision by two and a half millennia of Buddhist philosophers. The Buddhist word for this perpetual emotional rollercoaster of life is *samsāra*. What makes *samsāra* a scary place for the Buddhist is the pervasiveness of *dukkha*. This term is often translated as ‘suffering’, but ‘unsatisfactoriness’ is closer for reasons that will become clear. The problem of *dukkha* is central to the Buddhist soteriological project, as is its solution. Getting clear on the details of that project will help us to understand the propensity of philosophers and people more generally to neglect the ubiquity of affective experience in their thinking about and living of life.

*Dukkha* constitutes the first of what are often called the Four Noble truths (*ariya sacca*). However, as Peter Harvey (2013) points out, this translation is problematic for a number of reasons. *Sacca* is a noun that means ‘truth’ but also ‘reality’. Each *sacca* has an associated process or task that one must fully master before they can be ennobled (*ariyaṃ*) by their understanding of the relevant *sacca* (SN V 420). The first *sacca* is *dukkha* and it must be fully understood. There are no shortcuts to the end of *dukkha*; one must traverse the entire field of *dukkha* through the cultivation of careful attention and thereby develop an appropriate attitude of calm, detached equanimity. This attitude, coupled with a full exposure to the entire field of *dukkha* allows one to transcend its conditioning influence. The second *sacca* is *taṇhā*, often translated as ‘craving’, but literally meaning ‘thirst’. This *sacca* must be completely abandoned. Here we can see why it is better to translate *sacca* as reality than
truth, because it would make little sense to abandon a truth (Harvey 2013, 28). The third truth is \textit{nirodha} or cessation. This notion is essentially co-extensive with the final goal of Buddhist practice, \textit{nibbāna}. This \textit{sacca} must be experienced. The fourth \textit{sacca} is \textit{magga} or the path of practice that leads to the cessation of \textit{dukkha} through the relinquishment of craving. This \textit{sacca} must be cultivated. I focus on the first and second \textit{saccas} here for they bear most closely on the question of how and why people are predisposed to neglect the ubiquity of their affective states. I offer some brief remarks about the practical dimensions of this system in the opening sections of the following chapter.

Let’s look more carefully at this idea of \textit{dukkha}: "Now this, monks, is the Noble Truth of \textit{dukkha}: birth is \textit{dukkha}, aging is \textit{dukkha}, death is \textit{dukkha}; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are \textit{dukkha}; association with the unloved is \textit{dukkha}; separation from the loved is \textit{dukkha}; not getting what is wanted is \textit{dukkha}. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are \textit{dukkha}" (SN 5 421, \textit{emphasis} mine). The use of the ‘in short’ locution at the end of this passage suggests and inference from the first parts of this list to the final parts of the list. The logic of this inference is opaque. In order to clarify the structure of this inferential leap, the Buddhists distinguish between three sorts of \textit{dukkha} that are operating in the above list (SN 5 56). They are \textit{dukkha-dukkha}, which is the \textit{dukkha} of physical pain. These kinds of experiences are often only occasional, though there are chronic cases. This kind of \textit{dukkha} includes the physical and mental sufferings of birth, aging, illness, dying. The second form of \textit{dukkha} is called \textit{viparītāma-dukkha}, the \textit{dukkha} of the changing nature of all things. This includes the frustration of not getting what you want, and of getting what you don’t want. Everything desirable will eventually be taken from you. You will be united with that which you despise and separated from that which you love. This kind of \textit{dukkha} is quite frequent. Most of us experience this kind of unsatisfactoriness on a daily basis. Finally, there is \textit{sankhāra-dukkha}, the \textit{dukkha} of conditioned experience. This includes a basic un-satisfactoriness pervading all existence. This kind of \textit{dukkha} is contant. The struggle for existence lasts the course of one’s life; things rarely, if ever, measure up to our expectations. This is a very subtle form of \textit{dukkha} manifest in the conditional relations of the five aggregates.
The “five aggregates” is one of the most pervasive conceptual schemes by which Buddhists analyze the structure and content of mental and physical processes (SN III 47). They are *rūpa* or physical form, including the living body. Second is *vedanā* or feeling, the affective valence or hedonic tone that structures all sentient experience. Third is *saññā* or cognition. This term is often translated as ‘perception’ but that is misleading. The *saññā* aspect of mental processing refers to the subject’s ability to categorize and recognize particulars in perception and thought as falling under categories. Fourth is *saṅkhāras*; this term is notoriously difficult to translate. I would opt for ‘formations’ in order to capture the idea that the mind has an innate tendency to react or respond to sensory stimuli at the level of bodily, verbal, and cognitive action. These kinds of reactionary processes shape the personality and serve as the basic causal condition for the arising of the fifth aggregate, *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* is a discerning consciousness that arises in dependence on the functioning of our five canonical sensory modalities as well as a sixth cognitive modality that is responsible for a number of functions including thought, memory, and amodal sensory integration.

The important lesson from this analysis is that for the Buddhists, *saṅkhāric* reactions are constant. The arising of any conscious state presupposes a *saṅkhāric* foundation which occasions and conditions it in different ways (*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇam*). With every conscious experience, the sensory information embodied in that state is interpreted by our affective biases (*vedanā*) and categorical schemes (*saññā*). With every cognitive-affective appraisal we continue to generate reactions of different sorts on the valenced information embodied in these appraisals. These reactions then shape subsequent perceptions, evaluations, goals, intentions and actions. This is the heart of the Buddhist soteriological system. It is in virtue of continually generating such habitual reactions that we come to develop a deep craving (*taṇhā*), the latter of which is the cause of all *dukkha*. Thus, our capacity for being affectively perturbed creates a constant source of reactive dispositions in the mind. The feelings associated with this are difficult to process because the stream of consciousness is constantly changing (*anicca*). This creates an ever-present duress that makes the very process of living intrinsically exhausting. This is the deepest level of *dukkha*, the *dukkha* associated with the process of dealing with the constant conditioning influence of sensory bombardment on our self-regulating
sentient selves. The solution is to cultivate developed attention skills that modulate, reduce, and eventually eliminate the habit of psychological response that reifies and entrenches aversive attitudes towards this basic process of conditional existence (DN 22, ii 290; Anālayo 2003; 2014).

Regardless of the success of this approach to solving the problem of dukkha, the problem itself as articulated by the Buddhist philosophers gives us a plausible analysis of why it might be the case that philosophers and others might make the mistake of denying the ubiquitous presence and influence of bodily affect. Paying attention to the cascading influence of all the feelings in the body is difficult. So also is reckoning with the myriad habitual reactions we have tacitly developed to those various patterns of bodily affect. Further, this relentless churning over of bodily affect presents the embodied subject with the irreducible fact of their own finitude. The dukkha of this constant process of self-regulation reveals that the heart of subjectivity is not some transcendent observer or a fully-autonomous agent. Rather, living through a first-personal embodied perspective is like being a patient bound by the conditions of their own feelings. We are victimized by the incessant churning of these feelings within the framework of the body. We are victimized in multiple senses. First, we have no choice, we must live through these feelings as they arise. The only freedom we have in response to them is how and whether or not we attend to them. Further, in recognizing the constant oscillation of these feelings, we are confronted with our own mortality and the constant struggle that life demands in order to stave off the inevitable by constantly transforming the world outside of us into energy we can use to sustain ourselves for a time. It is no wonder then that in living our lives and theorizing about them in philosophy that we spend so much time ignoring our bodily feelings.

5.4 Feeling, Habit, Instinct, Action

We are now in a position to return to the neo-Jamesean view we have been developing. In this section I provide some Jamesean reasons for endorsing the second premise of the argument I outlined at the outset of the chapter. The second premise of the argument is the following:

AA2. If the phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment, then phenomenal affect is inseparably
causally coupled with habitual action.

To endorse this premise is to say that our capacity to feel plays a role in guiding our actions, a role that we could not envision executing in the absence of that feeling. This is a strong claim. My argument here is a kind of ‘just-so’ story and so a fully convincing account of why one should endorse this premise must wait for later. Nevertheless, it is instructive to hear what James has to say on this matter.

First, I want to get a bit more precise about the way I have been using some of James’s terminology. By ‘instinct’ James means something like an innate tendency to act in a certain way based on a determinate pattern of sensory stimuli that is paradigmatic for the organism in some way. A reflex is an automatic reaction that is grounded in the physiological structure of the organism but isn’t necessarily indexed to some typical and expected paradigm scenario in the environment. Reflex reactions can arise across multiple contexts, they do not require specific configurations of the world to trigger them (James 1890/1950 Vol. II, 383-4). By contrast, instincts are kinds of actions based on a determinate sensory stimulus that is paradigmatic for the organism in some way. Instincts have an aim that is worldly. They are based on a long-standing expectation that the organism is likely to encounter the world as seeming a certain way. Thus, having a ready-made behavioral response that can trigger in response to such an encounter has proven a solid strategy on the part of the organism at a phylogenetic level. For James, the key here is that experience is necessary to allow for the initial expression of instinct (ibid., 390). That is, an instinctual response must be triggered by an experience for that instinct to become manifest in the organism’s behavioral repertoire. By contrast, a habit is a determinate behavioral response that the organism uses a lot of the time (ibid., 402). For James, instincts that are not activated by experience are never expressed. Those that are, become habits.

The functional role of an experience-encoded behavioral habit is the following: “...habit simplifies the movements required to achieve a given result, makes them accurate and diminishes fatigue” (James 1890/1950 Vol. I, 112; emphasis in original). This kind of pragmatic attitude towards the functional role of habit is born of thinking about different ways that actions might be initiated by a subject. James differentiates between at least three other sorts of mental processes that might be
action-guiding: ideas, perceptions, and volitions (ibid. Vol. I, 115). However, in habitual action, all that is necessary to initiate the act is the feeling of a bodily sensation. However, why think these motivating sensations are always phenomenal to some degree? The answer: our attention is immediately drawn to them when they go awry. We are pre-reflectively aware of things being as they ought to be, and we become attentionally focused if and when the balance is tipped in a way that precludes completion of the habitual action. Consider the bodily feelings that accompany walking. When I stumble, I attend to my stubbed toe, otherwise, I carry on with whatever is explicitly (rather than implicitly) on my mind.88

Regardless of whether the bodily sensations we are living through pre-reflectively make it to the level of becoming objects of explicit attention or not, such feelings play an irreducible role in keeping the organism poised and responsive to the world. In James’s words:

Every impression which impinges on the incoming nerves produces some discharge down the outgoing ones, whether we be aware of it or not. Using sweeping terms and ignoring exceptions, we might say that every possible feeling produces a movement, and that the movement is a movement of the entire organism, and of each and all its parts. What happens patently when an explosion or a flash of lightning startles us, or when we are tickled, happens latently with every sensation which we receive. The only reason why we do not feel the startle or tickle in the case of insignificant sensations is partly its very small amount, partly our obtuseness.

(James 1890/1950 Vol II, 372)

Our capacity to feel in the body is always present and all our experience is manifest there to some degree or another. It is in virtue of our being so perturbed that we form habit-like and volitional responses. It is felt affect that plays the role of gatekeeper in encoding the contents of our experiences ‘upwards’ to the explicitly intentional functions of cognitive access or ‘downward’ to the habit-like functions of affective access.

88 See also chapter 3
Without this subtle and pervasive affective sensitivity to the world, without this affectively embodied perspective, it is not clear how our various strategies for dealing with the world would be developed in the first place. Certainly, we can develop subconscious habits that help us carry on in the world, but without the affective frame of the first-personal embodied perspective, we would have no way of integrating and setting up those responses. The journey to subconscious automatic reflex is one that starts with conscious experience. Affectively perturbed embodied consciousness is the window onto the world that allows us to forget what we can forget and remember what we need to remember in order for us to survive, as individuals, and as a species. Even those very successful responses are never fully unconscious in the phenomenal sense. As James points out, “...the changes [of feeling in the body] are so indefinitely numerous and subtle that the entire organism may be called a sounding-board, which every change of consciousness, however slight, may make reverberate (ibid, 450). Thus, we have reason now to endorse the second premise of the main argument of this chapter. Namely, that our capacity to feel plays an irreducible role in the integration of the content of experience and the establishing of how that content will be taken up by our different capacities for access.89

Conclusion

To conclude, let’s return to the important distinction that we explored in the opening section of this chapter. There, following Campbell (2004) I was critical of a distinction he makes between two different conceptions of the epistemic role of consciousness. The first was called the ‘how-to-do-it’ view, the second was the ‘what-it-is’ view. Briefly, the former claims that the role of experience is to help us know what to do in the face of a conscious perception. The second says that the role of consciousness is to select a target on the basis of attentionally captured sensory information which is

89 It is important to note that at this point, my argument is relying on a reconstruction of James’s view and its phenomenological plausibility. I have given empirical reasons to support this view in chapters 3 and 4. I will offer more empirical evidence in support of this view in the final chapter as well.
then taken up by the unconscious information processing of the brain that encodes an appropriate sensorimotor response to the selected object.

I have tried to show that what it is for a subject to select a target in Campbell’s (2004) sense already amounts to having an affectively motivated point of view on the object. Thus, the distinction between the ‘what it is’ view and the ‘how-to-do-it’ view looks less clear than it did at the outset. This is because one must already have a sense of how to do it before they can explicitly know what it is. I have already shown that the phenomenal character of perception is irreducibly normative along a number of dimensions, such that phenomenally conscious perceptual apprehension of a salient object already encodes that object as seeming a certain way to the subject relative to that subject’s capacity to interact with it. Additionally, when we start to take the living body as a locus of experiential affect, we see that the translation from perceptual experience of an object in vision to a motor response is mediated at every level by bodily affects that prime, orient, and motivate any response that might be forthcoming. Therefore, the ‘how-to-do-it’ conception of conscious experience is a perfectly viable way of thinking about the epistemic role of consciousness, so long as one is heedful of the role played by bodily affect.
6

Buddhism and the Affective Depths of the Mind

In action grown habitual, what instigates each new muscular contraction to take place in its appointed order is not a thought or a perception, but the sensation occasioned by the muscular contraction just finished. A strictly voluntary act has to be guided by idea, perception, and volition, through its whole course. In a habitual action, mere sensation is a sufficient guide...


Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that James did not spend as much time as he might have on what he called the ‘ejective’ centres of the mind. His motivations for this were practical. He felt it necessary to confine himself to the personal level of conscious experience. However, the advances in affective neuroscience and the conceptual resources of the Buddhist philosophers gives us reason to abandon this requirement. Therefore, in this chapter, I further that inquiry by looking at a debate between the Indian Buddhist schools regarding the nature of latent affective biases (anusayas) that tacitly condition our experience.

A thorough examination of this dialectic has two important fruits to bear. The first is that the Buddhists can help us explain in precise detail how the mind is affectively layered. That is, they have a rigorous account of how the mind is both responsive in real time to the objects it encounters in the world, while at the same time being tacitly conditioned by its own history of reacting to the world in affectively biased ways. The Buddhists were deeply concerned with how processes of affective bias were operating at the deepest levels of the mind and how we ought to conceive of their influence on our ordinary processes of perception and cognition. Thus, the phenomenological resources embodied in the Buddhist debate inspire new perspectives that can help animate contemporary discussions of affect in both philosophy and affective science. The Buddhist view I will reconstruct shows how the influence of bodily affect is pervasive, though not always explicit. Our bodily feelings condition our habits of attention, thus helping to structure the contours of the salience map that organizes our phenomenal field. This position finds strong resonance with recent developments in affective
neuroscience (Todd et al. 2015) and the psychology of emotion (Damasio 1999).\textsuperscript{90} Second, this local position within the Buddhist milieu is indicative of a wider propensity in Buddhist philosophy, one that I think could be helpful in a more global way for contemporary discussions of the mind in philosophy and science. I will develop the details of this more general point at the end of this chapter.

In §6.1 I provide some empirical motivations for taking Buddhist theories of affect seriously. I then develop an exegetical analysis of the Buddhist concept of \textit{anusaya} outlining the different ways this notion is taken up in the Sutta literature of the Tipiṭaka. In §6.2 I delve into the Abhidhamma literature of the Tipiṭaka.\textsuperscript{91} In this section, I explore a debate between different Indian Buddhist schools about the nature of \textit{anusaya}. There I raise questions for the view that \textit{anusayas} can be identified with their \textit{kammically} active expressions (\textit{pariyuṭṭhāna}). By ‘\textit{kammically} active’ I refer to explicit reactions that subjects have to meaningful situations. By Buddhist standards, these are the kinds of things that further entrench a being’s enmeshment in the round of re-birth (\textit{samsāra}). This is to be contrasted with tacit dispositions that enable explicit reactions (\textit{anusayas}). In trying to get clear on how these two levels of affective processing are connected, I claim that we should look to positions outlined in the Abhidhamma text \textit{Kathāvatthu} as a corrective. I argue on exegetical and philosophical grounds that the Theravādin position is mistaken. Finally, in §6.3 I offer some thoughts on how the Buddhist conception of the affective mind can help guide discussions of affect and subjectivity in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science. I will take this lesson to heart in the final two chapters as well.

\textsuperscript{90} For more, see chapter 3

\textsuperscript{91} The Abhidhamma texts are those that stratify the discourses in non-contextual terms. These texts represent an attempt to systematize the teachings contained in the Suttas into an absolute philosophical system. One of the exegetical purposes of this paper is to explore the philosophical differences between how certain ideas are presented in the Suttas and how those ideas evolve in the Abhidhamma. The main commentator on the Tipiṭaka is a philosopher named Buddhaghosa who was a fifth century Indian Buddhist monk. His scholarly works form the intellectual backbone of Theravāda Buddhism.
6.1 **The Buddhist View of Deep Affect**[^6.1]

In this section I have two tasks. The first is to provide some empirical motivations for the further inclusion of Buddhist philosophical psychology in a dissertation concerning the cognitive science and philosophy of consciousness and affect (§6.1.1). The second is to provide some conceptual background on how some of the Indian Buddhists understood the notion of anusaya (§6.1.2).

### 6.1.1 Empirical Considerations of the Relevance of Buddhist Philosophy to a Theory of Affect

In the last chapter, we saw that the Buddhists have a rather harsh view of the human condition, one beset by the problem of dukkha. However, the Buddhists weren’t philosophical pessimists because they had a sophisticated repertoire of self-observation techniques — often called ‘meditation’ — which when developed in conjunction with the appropriate understanding (sammā diṭṭhi), purport to lead one out of the problem of dukkha entirely.

In the last twenty years or so, the scientific research on meditation, especially Buddhist meditation, has become a mainstay of contemporary psychological interventions and neuroscientific experimentation. Perhaps less helpfully, the pervasiveness of mindfulness hype in popular society has given rise to the unfortunate view that Buddhist meditation is a kind of existential panacea. However, it is worth noting that some intriguing studies have been done — I will treat of them below — which give us reason to take both the practices of Buddhist philosophy and their theory seriously, especially in the context of thinking about the pervasive influence affect has on our sense of self and world.

A fully detailed analysis of the Indian Buddhist system of contemplative practice (satipaṭṭhāna) would take us too far afield at this juncture. The contemporary operationalized schemas for categorizing practices is a perfectly adequate starting point for our discussion here. Most current scientific studies of contemplative practice categorize different sorts of meditation into two basic kinds: focused attention (FA) and open monitoring (OM) (Lutz et al. 2008). To this I add a third

[^6.1]: In this section and those that follow I make liberal use of citations from a series of translations I have done concerning the notion of anusaya. These references are taken from a larger set of translations that can be found in the Appendix.
kind: prosocial cultivation (PS) (Grant 2014). Each of these operationalized categories has rough correlates in the category schemas of traditional Buddhist contemplative practices. From the perspective of the Pāli texts that have been our focus thus far, FA corresponds roughly to shamatha practices, whose primary purpose is to calm and concentrate the mind by developing a single-minded, unwavering focus on a chosen object of concentration, often the breath (MN III 88). By contrast, OM style practices roughly correspond to what is called vipassanā meditation, the primary purpose of which is to purify the mind of its defilements through insight into the basic causal functions which predispose the mind to operate in a self-destructive way (cf. DN II 290). Finally, PS can be thought of as corresponding roughly to the cultivation of the brahmavihāras. These are loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā), and equanimity (upekkhā) (AN V 299). In the final case, the purpose of these practices is to develop an expansive prosocial attitude that overcomes the kinds of habitual biases that cause us to feel warm towards those we know, love, and trust, and less so to strangers or those with whom we have had less than optimal relations.

For the purposes of this brief discussion, we will confine our analysis to experiments that treat of the OM style of practice as these have generated the most interesting results thus far. In one study that compared long term meditation practitioners (LTMs) with over 2000 hours of experience versus newly trained meditators, there was a marked difference in ratings of the affective valence of painful heat stimuli applied to the left wrist (Perlman et al. 2010). Subjects were given a pain stimulus on the inside of the left wrist by a thermal pad. The temperature was increased from 32 °C to 49 °C at a rate of 0.7 °C/s. Both OM and FA based techniques were employed in the study and the experimenters found that the reported reduction in unpleasantness was only pronounced when subjects were instructed to practice using OM but not in the FA conditions.

One possible reason for this finding is that in the OM practice, subjects explicitly enter into a mode of attention that limits cognitive elaboration and reaction to the hedonic valence of their

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93 Note that the development of upekkhā is also essential for the cultivation of OM as well as PS.
experience. When the reactionary tendencies are limited, the felt unpleasantness of the experience decreases. In another study, similar to the one just outlined, both ratings of negative affective valence and sensory intensity were markedly lower in LTM than in novices (Grant 2014; Grant and Rainville 2009). In yet another study, it was found that after only four days of meditation training, that practicing meditation in the presence of a noxious thermal stimulus versus a rest condition resulted in a decreased in reported unpleasantness of 57% and intensity ratings by 40% (Zeidan et al. 2011). It is fascinating that the efficacy of these practices seems to obtain across not only the expected contrast between an expert and a novice practitioner, but also across actual practice and a resting condition.

The practical benefits of these sorts of techniques has been well-extolled (perhaps too much so) in the popular media and elsewhere. Here is not the place to further that discussion. Rather, I want to point to some conceptual issues that arise out of interpreting these experiments. The differences in these results are informative as they reflect the complex dimensions of pain experience as well as important conceptual distinctions in the Buddhist philosophical framework that undergirds these practices. Distinguish between three dimensions of pain experience. First, in any pain experience there are sensory properties that vary in intensity. Second, there is the hedonic gloss that makes that sensory contact unpleasant. There is also a third dimension that we might call the ‘cognitive elaboration’ of pain, our explicit reactions to the felt unpleasantness of pain that often result in judgments to the effect that our pain is ‘bad’. These three aspects can be teased apart. Consider a child who falls down when running and looks around to see if any adults are watching. The child has some sensory experience of felt pressure on the leg. Insofar as it hurts, that sensory information is being processed by the nociceptive system of the brain which then results in a felt unpleasantness for the child. Depending on the degree of reaction that child gets from adults in the vicinity, the basic unpleasantness can be

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94 It is worth noting that in the first and last study there was a marked difference between reports of felt unpleasantness and intensity. In these cases, the intensity was less affected than in the second study. This difference is probably partially explained by the fact that different traditions were utilized in the first and third studies versus the second. Meditation practices do not exist in a vacuum. Their meaning and efficacy is tied up deeply with their socio-cultural conditions.
elaborated into something far more dramatic than it might otherwise have been in the absence of any pronounced reaction on the part of the caregiver.

One relevant question that arises here is this: how do we form habits of cognitive elaboration that might predispose us to (over-)react to unpleasant experiences when they arise? When subjects report reduced felt unpleasantness when practicing OM, what aspect of the threefold dimension of pain experience is being attenuated? As we shall see in the next section, the Buddhist philosophers have a sophisticated answer to this question. In reconstructing their answer, I will show how the Buddhist view of the affective layering of the mind can help us further substantiate the neo-Jamesean view I began working out in the previous chapter on the epistemic role of consciousness. This is the second explanatory boon of the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character I have been developing.

6.1.2 The Canonical View of Anusaya in the Suttas

Now that we have taken a brief survey of some of the empirical motivations for thinking about the boons that the Buddhist philosophical lifeworld has to offer a theory of affect, it is time to delve more deeply into the theoretical architecture that grounds these various practices.

As mentioned at the outset, the Buddhist concept that is most central to our discussion of the affective depths of the mind is *anusaya*. Etymologically, this term denotes a kind of latency, dormancy or otherwise ‘below the surface’ propensity. I will translate the term as ‘underlying tendency’, but semantically speaking, it is most important to understand that the notion of *anusaya* refers to dispositions that condition current experience in a tacit way. The task of a philosophical account of the *anusayas* is to explain how their implicit conditioning influence relates to explicitly unwholesome mental states that are occasioned by causally proximate contact with objects or persons. The Indian Buddhist philosophers exercised an enormous amount of energy in attempting to explain this relation. In approaching that question here, I hope to make some headway on the discussion that I began previously with William James on the different ways that affective responsiveness can operate on our behavior. The difficulty with the Jamsean position is that it doesn’t have a clear account of how our
tacit conditioning impacts our explicit reactions. The Buddhist view that I will reconstruct here fills that lacuna.

The Buddhists distinguish between several different kinds of *anusayas*. They can be grouped in different ways according to the number of *anusayas* associated with the schema. The most common is the sevenfold analysis:

Bhikkhus, there are seven underlying tendencies. What are the seven? The underlying tendency to sensual lust, the underlying tendency to aversion, the underlying tendency to views, the underlying tendency to doubt, the underlying tendency to conceive, the underlying tendency to lust for becoming, the underlying tendency to ignorance. Indeed these, bhikkhus, are the seven underlying tendencies.

(AN IV 9)\(^{95}\)

The different *anusayas* listed above represent different habitual reactions that keep the subject bound to the *saṃsāric* field of *kammic* relations. *Saṃsāra* is the world of existential misery (*dukkha*) that we are trapped in because of our entrenched habits (*sañkhāra*) and ignorance (*avijja*). We react to the world with actions (*kamma*) that condition our futures (in this life and the next), thereby further entrenching us in habits of reaction. Only by completely overcoming these, can one attain liberating insight and escape the conditioning influence of *saṃsāric* conditioning (*nibbāna*).

Another schema comes from the Mahāmālunkya Sutta (MN I 432) where discussion of the *anusayas* is paired with the lower five *samyojanas* or fetters. The fetters are a group of ten ‘curtains’ or blockages, the removal of which is co-extensive with the attainment of different levels of nobility (*ariya*) on the path to *nibbāna*. Finally, in the Cullavedalla Sutta (MN I 299) discussion of the *anusayas* is confined to the propensity to react in different ways to feelings (*vedanā*), with craving for pleasant feelings, aversion to unpleasant feelings and ignorance to neutral feelings. These three reactions correspond to the three unwholesome roots of lust (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion

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\(^{95}\) Sattime, bhikkhave, anusayā. katame satta? kāmarāgānusayo, patīghānusayo, diṭṭhānusayo, vicīkicchānusayo, mānānusayo, bhavarāgānusayo, avijjānusayo. ime kho, bhikkhave, satta anusayā”ti.
(moha). These are the mental factors that cause us the most trouble as they tacitly condition our experience in myriad ways.

In order to get clear about how these different schemas function in the Buddhist theory of mind, we need to have a basic understanding of what the mind is and how it functions. Recall from the first and fifth chapters that feeling or vedanā is one of the basic constituents of the person (khandha). There are five, four mental, one physical; they are physical form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), cognition (sañña) which is often misleadingly translated as ‘perception’, formations (saṅkhāra) and consciousness (viññāna). Form is the living and sensitive body. Feeling is the hedonic tone of all experience that arises in virtue of the living body being perturbed by experience. Cognition is the part of the mind that recognizes and categorizes things according to past experience, similar to what psychologist’s call ‘working memory’. Formations are reaction patterns in bodily action, speech, and thought that condition subsequent experience. Finally, consciousness is the part of the mind that arises as a result of sensory receptors processing relevant sensory information, thereby giving rise to experience. The causal interaction of these processes is what constitutes a person in Buddhist philosophy.

Here’s an example. When I smell freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, it is in virtue of my living body that my senses are poised with respect to those cookies. By smelling them, a moment of olfactory consciousness arises. I then remember the last time I ate such cookies and how delicious they were. I start to feel very pleasant and generate a desire to eat them. As I take a bite, a new moment of consciousness arises, as does a more intense feeling of pleasure, thereby reinforcing my evaluation of their deliciousness and my desire for more. This causally dense process is kept together by habits of appropriation. According to the Buddhists, experience, even this pleasant one of eating cookies, is fraught with unsatisfactoriness (dukkha). This is because everything is changing and impermanent (anicca) and we are always reacting to what is happening in a way that belies a desire for things to stay the same (pleasant things should remain; unpleasant things should depart). This never happens but our reaction habits continue and this creates a duress that enmeshes us in a matrix of conditional relations with our world that are fraught with misery.
According to the Buddhists, we are always being affected and our deepest habit is to react to those perturbations in a host of subtle and not so subtle ways. The process of being hedonically perturbed (*vedanā*) by the world, and then categorizing one’s experience on that basis (*saññā*), disposes us towards certain patterns of reaction (*saṅkhāra*). The habitual entrenchment of these reaction patterns forms a deeply ingrained propensity of appropriation (*upādāna*) whereby we develop craving (*tanhā*) for the pleasant (*sukha*), aversion to the painful (*dukkha*), thus conditioning all of our conscious experience (*viññāṇa*). This appropriation process is a constant source of duress. It happens explicitly when something obvious perturbs us, but it also happens tacitly beneath the surface of our ordinary powers of attention, even in the absence of explicitly upsetting events. With every explicitly morally unwholesome defilement (*kilesa*) there is an underlying tendency that abides during periods of relative calm as an enabling factor for subsequent arising of explicitly valence states. When defilements are present within but latent they are called *anusaya*, when those propensities become actively manifest in thought, speech, or action, they are called *pariyutṭhāna*, which literally means ‘outbursts’.

The soteriological centrality of *anusaya* for the Buddhist project of liberation could not be plainer. Indeed, the Buddha goes as far as to claim that the very purpose of living the holy life of the *Dhamma* is to eradicate these *anusaya* (AN IV 9):

Bhikkhus, the holy life is lived for the abandonment, the cutting off of the seven underlying tendencies. What are the seven? The holy life is lived for the abandonment, the cutting off of the underlying tendency to sensual lust...to aversion...to views...to doubt...to conceit...to lust for becoming...to ignorance...Bhikkhus, for these, the holy life is lived for the abandonment, the cutting off of these seven underlying tendencies.96

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96 *Sattanāṃ, bhikkhave, anusagānaṃ pahānāya samucchedāya brahmācariyaṃ vussati. Katamesaṃ sattanāṃ? Kāmarāgānasayassa pahānāya samucchedāya brahmācariyaṃ vussati, patīghānasayassa... Pe... Dīṭṭhānasayassa... Vipākācārasayassa... Mānānasayassa... Bhavānągānasayassa... Ajñānakusayassa pahānāya samucchedāya brahmācariyaṃ vussati. Imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, sattanāṃ anusagānaṃ pahānāya samucchedāya brahmācariyaṃ vussati.*
Even more telling, in this next passage from the same Sutta, the Buddha then says that it is only insofar as one has eradicated the *anusaya* that one can be said to have made an end of *dukkha*:

Indeed, bhikkhus, because a bhikkhu has eliminated the underlying tendency to sensual lust, cut it off at the foundation, uprooted it like a palm tree, [accomplished] its utter cessation so that there is no more future arising; ...because a bhikkhu has eliminated the underlying tendency to aversion...to views...to doubt...to conceit...to lust for existence...to ignorance, cut it off at the foundation, uprooted it like a palm tree, [accomplished] its utter cessation so that there is no more future arising, this person is said Bhikkhus to be a bhikkhu who has cut off craving, stripped away the fetters, properly penetrated conceit, has made an end of *dukkha*.97

This language is further echoed in a key passage from verse 338 of chapter twenty-four of the *Dhammapada*: “Just as a tree, although cut down, grows again, if the root is undamaged and firm, in just he same way this suffering returns again and again, if the latent tendency to craving is not removed.” The key point here is that without eliminating these underlying tendencies, there is no release from *dukkha*. The implication of this assertion seems to be that there is some kind of difference between that which underlies our basic mental processes, and that which is explicit. However, getting clear on what this distinction amounts is hardly straight forward as I will show in what follows.

What is beyond dispute here is the following. Even though many of the canonical passages on *anusaya* focus on the sevenfold schema, it is important to emphasize the role that *vedanā* plays in further establishing the connection between the *anusaya* and the eradication of *dukkha*. Most importantly, *vedanā* is the condition (*paccaya*) for the arising of craving or thirst (*taṇhā*), the latter of which is the second ennobling reality, the cause of *dukkha*. Our habit of constantly reacting to felt affect in a heedless way is the driving force behind the *sankhāric* arising of sensory-cognitive consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

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97 *Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṁ kāmarāgānusayo pahīno hoti uchchinnamālo tālāvatthukato anabhāvaṁkato āyatīṁ anuppādadhammo patighānusayo ... pe ... diṭṭhānusayo ... vicikicchānusayo ... mānānusayo ... bhavarāgānusayo ... avijjānusayo pahīno hoti uchchinnamālo tālāvatthukato anabhāvaṁkato āyatīṁ anuppādadhammo. ayaṁ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhikkhu accechchi taṇhaṁ, vivattayi saṁyojanam, sammā mānābhisamayā antamakāsi dukkhasā”ti. dutiyaṁ.*
This point about the centrality of felt affect is put succinctly in the Chachakka Sutta (MN III 286) where the causal contact (phassa) of an object with its relevant sensory receptor and the consciousness that comes with that is seen as direct evidence for the presence of anusaya. Consider the following:

Bhikkhus, dependent on the eye and visible form there is the arising of eye-consciousness, the association of these three is contact, with contact as condition there is the arising of either a pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, if one rejoices, welcomes, [and] stays attached to it, then the underlying tendency to lust underlies the person. When one is touched by a painful feeling, when one mourns, is wearied, and cries beating one’s breast, laments and stays confused, then the underlying tendency to aversion underlies. When one is touched by a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, if one does not know clearly as it is in itself, the origination, passing away, the allure, the disadvantage, [and] the escape from that feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance underlies. Surely Bhikkhus, that one should be able to make an end of suffering not having abandoned the underlying tendency to sensual lust for pleasant feelings, not having dispelled the underlying tendency to aversion for painful feelings, not having uprooted the underlying tendency to ignorance regarding neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings, without abandoning ignorance and not having generated wisdom, that this will be the end of suffering in this very world – this is not possible.98

The analysis here is penetrating and stark. At every moment of sensory contact there is a feeling that arises in response to the contact. This feeling generates a saṅkhāric reaction that not only has a direct causal upshot on subsequent moments of conscious experience, but also creates a habit that further predisposes the subject to react in similar ways to similar situations in the future. The habitual

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98 cakkhuñca, bhikkhave, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññānaṃ, tiṇṇhaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā. so sukhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno abhinandati abhihivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. tassa rāgānusayo anuseti. dukkhaṃ vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno socati kilamati paridevati urattāliṃ kandati sammohāṃ āpajjati. tassa patighānusayo anuseti. adukkhamasukhaṃ vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno sassā vedanāya samudayaṃcā atthihaṃca ādīnavaṃca nissaraṃca yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. tassa avijjānusayo anuseti. so vata, bhikkhave, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayaṃ appahāya dukkhaṃ vedanāya patighānusayaṃ appatihaṃdotsanaṃvā adukkhamasukhaṃ vedanāya avijjānusayaṃ asamūhanitvā avijjatā appahāya vijjatā anuppādetvā diṭṭheva dhamme dukkhasantakaro bhavissatiṃ — netam thānaṃ vijjati.
entrenchment thus moves in two directions, one up, the other down. This dual structure directly mirrors the position I developed in the fourth and fifth chapters in positing a contrast between cognitive and affective access. The upward movement is the way in which reactions condition our immediate responses to whatever comes next. The downward movement is the way in which our current reactions create a substratum of dispositional tendencies that lie ready to become active whenever we are provoked by the world in the appropriate way. The notion of *anusaya* is there to do the work of explaining this downward conditioning influence.

At this point, we still need some further motivation for understanding why the Buddhist soteriological project is in need of something like *anusayas*. The answer comes from consideration of the parable of the infant (MN I 432). The Buddhists claim that all sentient beings are beset by *dukkha* and that all beings are, in some sense and to varying degrees, responsible for their own emancipation. Thus, it follows that even a newborn infant is in some way defiled by unwholesome mental states. If they weren’t, then they would not have been reborn. This might seem like a ridiculous position to maintain. After all, what does a newborn child know about the obsessive agitation of sexual lust or the heated preoccupation of a focused and hateful resentment of an enemy? Surely nothing at all. The positing of a latent layer of mental functioning where the tendency towards such active emotional responses might develop is the functional role of the *anusaya*.

In a discussion with the monk Mālukya, the Buddha makes exactly this point in the following way:

Surely Mālukyaputta, that wanderers of other faiths will censure and reproach you with the case of the young infant? Indeed Mālukyaputta, for a child young in years, for a slow youngster, an infant, they do not have personality-view. Where could personality-view arise in them? Yet, the underlying tendency to personality-view underlies [their experience]. Indeed Mālukyaputta, for a child young in years, for a little younger, an infant, they do not have [a sense of] ‘The Dhamma’. Where could
Thus, the picture on offer here is one where there is a bifurcation between explicitly morally valenced mental states that occur in causal dependence on their soliciting influence and the capacity, tendency, or disposition to be so affected. Call this the ‘bifurcation thesis’. This thesis asserts that it is possible to have the latter without the former, but not vice-versa. In some way, this is common sense. We are not always sexually aroused, but the tendency exists and without it, sexually appealing people and scenarios would not arouse us. Infants and young children are not defiled by the preoccupations of hateful resentment, but their aversion to not being fed on time can be seen as a natal seed from which this more complex emotion grows.

6.2 Different Views on the Nature of Anusaya

Not all Buddhist philosophers are in agreement about my parsing of functional role of anusaya. As we will see, Buddhaghosa argues, along with the Theravāda elders, that the anusaya and its pariyutṭhāna are identical. In this section I will explain the motivations the Theravādins had for identifying anusaya and pariyutṭhāna defilements (kilesa). I will also provide a reconstruction of a debate on this issue recorded in the Kathāvatthu, a text of the Theravāda Abhidhamma collection. I argue that the attempt to establish an identity claim between pariyutṭhāna and anusaya kilesas is not successful.

99 Note: the sequence continues for the remaining of the five lower fetters; vicikicchā or doubt, silabbata-parāmāsa or attachment to rights and rituals, kāmacchando or sensual desire, and vyāpādo or ill-will.

100 Nanu, mālukyaputta, aṇṇatitthiyā paribbājakā ımīnā tarunūpamena upārambhena upārambhissanti? daharassa hi, mālukyaputta, kumārassa mandassa uttānaseyyakassa sakkāyotipī na hoti, kuto panassa uppaṭṭhissati sakkāyadiṭṭhi? anusetvevassa sakkāyadiṭṭhānusayo. daharassa hi, mālukyaputta, kumārassa mandassa uttānaseyyakassa dhammātipi na hoti, kuto panassa uppaṭṭhissati dhammesu vicikicchā? anusetvevassa vicikicchānusayo. daharassa hi, mālukyaputta, kumārassa mandassa uttānaseyyakassa silātipi na hoti, kuto panassa uppaṭṭhissati sīlesu sīlabbataparāmāsānusayo. daharassa hi, mālukyaputta, kumārassa mandassa uttānaseyyakassa kāmātipi na hoti, kuto panassa uppaṭṭhissati kāmesu kāmacchando? anusetvevassa kāmarāgānusayo. daharassa hi, mālukyaputta, kumārassa mandassa uttānaseyyakassa byāpātipi na hoti, kuto panassa uppaṭṭhissati sattesu byāpādo? anusetvevassa byāpādānusayo. namu, mālukyaputta, aṇṇatitthiyā paribbājakā ımīnā tarunūpamena upārambhena upārambhissantī ti?
The arguments take place in the form of a series of questions and answers between a Theravādin elder and representatives of a few different Buddhist schools identified by the *aṭṭhakathās* commentary as Andhakas, Uttarāpathakas, Mahāsanghikas, and Sammitiyas (*Kath-a*, IX, 4, pp. 144). There are three lines of debate that we encounter in the *Kathāvatthu* concerning the functional role of *anusaya*. The first is about whether or not *anusaya* have sense objects (Book IX, Chapter 4), the second concerns whether they are morally indeterminate (Book XI, Chapter 1), and the third is about whether *anusayas* exist within subjects in a way that is dissociated from *citta*, or the kammically active mental framework in virtue of which the subject is in touch with some aspect of their sensory-cognitive world (Book XIV, Chapter 5).

The argumentative structure of these three disputes is basically isomorphic. Thus, I will focus on the first of these chapters regarding sense objects (chapter 4 of Book IX of the *Kathāvatthu*). My reasoning for this is the following. In perception, causal commerce with perceptually salient objects both does and does not play a role in the conditioning influence of *anusaya* on the stream of consciousness. Causal commerce with objects does play a role in that being perceptually acquainted with objects of various sorts has a direct impact on the phenomenal character of one’s experience of that object, what it’s like to perceive it (Nagel 1974). This causal commerce with objects also does not have a conditioning influence on experience insofar as the phenomenal character of one’s experience is also determined by things happening within the subject without any direct reference to what is happening in the world (like ruminating on an old memory, for example).

My reading of the Buddhist position offers a positive account of how different levels of mental functioning help to structure the phenomenal field in different ways. By ‘phenomenal field’ I mean a world of experience that is disclosed to a subject first-personally in virtue of their having an embodied perspective on that world (Bayne 2007). The world (*loke*) only shows up for us in virtue of our psychophysical constitution (*nama-rūpa*) being organized in a particular way. This reading helps us to

101 For some detail about the subtle differences, see the Appendix where these chapters are translated in full.
answer our initial question from the last chapter about how to analyze James’s notion of there being ‘ejective’ sectors of the mind. In short, the Buddhist position I will reconstruct gives us a detailed account of how affective access works and how the conditioning influence of affect on behavior can be phenomenal, even though it often operates on our experience outside the purview of our attention, which here can be read as a gateway to cognitive access (Prinz 2011).

Thus, the debate begins. To state it briefly, the Theravadin exegete wants to maintain that it is inappropriate to read the Buddha’s parable of the infant as affirming that there are two different kinds of mental process happening. The *anusaya* of a defilement (*kilesa*) and its outburst (*pariyutthāna*) are identical. In his commentary on the parable of the infant in the Mahāmālukya Sutta (MN I 432) cited above, Buddhaghosa defines the verb of *anusaya*, that is, *anuseti* as that which ‘underlies or lays dormant’. The commentary than analyses the verb in terms of *appahinatāya* or non-abandonment: “One lies dormant because of the state of not being abandoned. That which lies dormant is called a fetter.” (Ps I, 129). Thus, on this view, the only difference between *anusaya* and *pariyutthāna* is that the latter refers to the defilement as playing an immediate causal role and the former refers to the subject’s state of not having abandoned the defilement.

Buddhaghosa’s motivation for affirming the identity is twofold. First, he is committed to a general Abhidhamma principle of momentariness (Rospatt 1995). This principle asserts that the basic temporal interval of any mental event is an instant. Different schools of Abhidhamma thought disagree about the precise way to characterize a moment, but that need not concern us here (Fraullweller 1995). On this view, there is only one thing happening in the mind at a time. Thus, it is not possible for one who endorses momentariness to maintain a distinction between *anusaya kilesas* and *pariyutthāna kilesas*, except nominally. In order for momentary mental events to be conditioned by the past, there

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102 As noted in the introduction, my use of the Romanized Pali of Buddhaghosa’s commentaries on the tipitka come from the Digital Pali reader: https://pali.sirimangalo.org/

103 *anuseti* appahinatāya anuseti. *anusayamāno samyojanam nāma hoti.*
must be an underlying mental stream that have a more stable temporal profile to maintain the biasing influence of the past over the present. From the Thervādin point of view, both anusaya and pariyutthāna kilesas are defined by the kind of kilesa they instantiate and that is enough for them to be understood as identical. Another philosophical problem with the view that they are separate is that it is difficult to understand what it means for a dispositional tendency to be actual. Potentials are precisely that, potentials, which seem to definitionally preclude them from being actual. Therefore, in rejecting the orthodox commentarial view, I will have to provide some account of how a disposition can be actual.

In spite of this twofold motivation, I argue that identifying anusaya and pariyutthāna kilesas is unsatisfactory because the dialogues we have already encountered make it clear that anusayas are not just negative concepts denoting a lack of a certain kind of attitude on the part of subjects who have them. On the contrary, anusaya play a distinct functional role that differentiates the state of the liberated person from the one who is not actively defiled but not yet entirely free from the conditioning influences of long-standing reactive habits. That distinct functional role must be understood in contrast with the causal influence that explicitly valenced mental events have on the structure of the current experience of a subject. As we saw with the parable of the infant, even small children can have tendencies towards certain kinds of outburst without yet having the cognitive abilities to fully manifest those outbursts. Consider another example. I might be in a perfectly pleasant mood today, but if someone were to cut me off while I was driving to the beach, my underlying tendency towards anger might arise as verbal outburst of outrage and indignation. It is only in virtue of being predisposed to react in certain ways that situations come to solicit our responses in ways that those predispositions prime us for.

By contrast, as we will see, the non-Theravādin interlocutors try to maintain that there is an important and principled distinction between kammically latent defilements and kammically active ones. I will argue in favor of the latter position and in so doing, provide comments throughout to offer clarification and contextualization of the various dialectical steps. Let’s take a closer look at Book IX, Chapter 4 of the Kathāvatthu:
Th: Are underlying tendencies without a sense object?

Mahāsangika/Sammitiya (M/S): Yes

Th: Then anusayas are part of either form, nibbāna, the eye, touch or the other sense bases?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.\(^{104}\)

It is important to understand why the Mahāsangikas and Sammityas would want to deny an identification of anusaya with these various options canvassed by the Theravādin inquisitor. The list refers to form (rūpa) or the living body, nibbāna which is the final goal of an unconditioned deathless state (amata), and then a list of all the sensory systems that enable consciousness but are not themselves conscious. None of the available options are mental. It is true that nibbāna is something more interstitial in being both realized in the experience of a liberated person and having some form of existence that is beyond the divide of psycho-physical (nama-rūpa) interactions with a causally conditioned world (loke). Nevertheless, it would be a trap to affirm such an identity because the point of positing the anusayas in the first place is to explain the problem of how minds can continue to be defiled and prone to defilement — and thus bound to the cycle of samsāric proliferation — without being occurrently overpowered by some explicitly manifest morally unwholesome state.

The questioning now shifts gears in a way that allows the Mahāsangika/Sammitiya proponent of anusaya to explain the relation between its latent functioning and other more explicit defilements:

Th: Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust lack a sense object?

M/S: Yes.

Th: Are sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hindrance of attachment to sensual lust without a sense object?

\(^{104}\) anusaya anārammanāti? āmantā. rūpaṃ nibbānaṃ cakkhāyatanāṃ ... pe ... phoṭṭhabbāyatananti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....
M/S: No, surely one should not speak in this way.

All of the different terms in the list are examples of pariyūṭṭhāna kilesa, that is, *kammically* active mental events that arise in direct dependence on a soliciting cause in the world. Such states are morally valenced by being either wholesome (*kusala*) or in the case of the specific items in the above list, unwholesome (*akusala*). It is in virtue of the *pariyūṭṭhāna kilesa* having a sense object that they are said to be *kammically* active, or having a direct and discernible impact on occurrent mental functioning. By contrast, it is in virtue of the *anusaya kilesa* lacking a sense object, a direct occasioning cause, that they are said to be dormant, latent, underlying.

Th: Does sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hindrance of attachment to sensual lust have a sense object?

M/S: Yes.

Th: Does the latent bias to sensual lust have a sense object?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.\(^{105}\)

To take the example of sensual lust (*kāmarāgā*), we can now distinguish between two different ways in which this defilement is present in the system. The first is a *kammically* active manifestation whereby one is overpowered by the defilement because it is having a direct influence over one’s apprehension of one’s situation. In virtue of having that state, or being in it, one is morally culpable. In such cases, the defilement can be understood in terms of an outburst (*pariyūṭṭhāṇaṃ*), a fetter (*saṃyojanam*), etc. These cases are to be contrasted with *anusaya*-like cases of defilement in that the former but not the latter have occurrent sensory objects that occasion the arising of the consciousness that is so-defiled. In order for *anusayas* to have a conditioning influence over the structure of the stream of consciousness, it is not necessary for there to be a relevant object of perception that is

\(^{105}\) Kāmarāgānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā. kāmarāga kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānaṃ kāmarāgasamyojanam kāmogho kāmayogo kāmacchandanivaraṇaṃ anārammaṇanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... kāmarāga kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānaṃ kāmarāgasamyojanam kāmogho kāmayogo kāmacchandanivaraṇaṃ sārammaṇanti? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo sārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....
functioning as the object-terminus for an occurrent intentional arc. It is not necessary that a sexually attractive person be present before me for me to have a propensity to react a certain way if they were to come by. I carry my lust with me in my body in a way that primes me such that I am prone to react a certain way to the arrival of my lover when they do come by.

If it is the case that *anusayas* are not identical with any of the non-mental aspects of reality and it’s also the case that in spite of being a mental function, *anusayas* also lack a sense object that causes them to arise, then it is a reasonable demand that the proponent of this reading of *anusaya* give an account of where in the Buddhist mental economy these kinds of mental events arise. This line of inference is what motivates the next stage of questioning:

**Th:** Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust lack a sense object?

**M/S:** Yes.

**Th:** In which aggregate is it included?

**M/S:** It is included in the formations aggregate.

**Th:** Is the formations aggregate without a sense object?

**M/S:** Surely one should not speak that way.

**Th:** Is the formations aggregate without a sense object?

**M/S:** Yes.

**Th:** Are the feeling, cognition, and consciousness aggregates without sense objects?

**M/S:** Surely one should not speak this way.\(^{106}\)

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\(^{106}\) kāmarāgānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā. katamakkhandhapariyāpannoti saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpannoti. saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? āmantā. vedanākkhandho saṅākkhandho viññānakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...
At the end of this exchange the questioner has moved his opponent into a position of having to affirm that the *sankhāra* aggregate has a special status in that it, and no other mental aggregate (*vedanā, saññā, viññāna*), is able to arise without a sensory object to occasion it. Why would this be the case? The answer is that the *saṅkhāra* aggregate has a special status because it includes *anusaya*. Because *anusayas* do not have a sense object, it follows that *sankhāras* also lack a sense object. However, insofar as *saṅkhāras* also function as reactions to occurrent sensory-cognitive experience and provide the causal basis for the arising or occurrent moments of consciousness, it is also true that *saṅkhāras* have sense objects. The position is one that affirms that *anusaya-saṅkhāras* lack a sense object and other *saṅkhāras* associated more explicitly with occurrent moments of sensory-cognitive consciousness (*viññāna*) do have an object. Thus, being committed to having opposing answers to the same question isn’t problematic on its own.

However, from here, the Theravādin questioner tries to show that the position under consideration entails an absurdity:

**Th:** Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust included in the formations aggregate without a sense object?

**M/S:** Yes.

**Th:** Is sensual lust included in the formations aggregate without a sense object?

**M/S:** Surely one should not speak this way.

Note the consistency here in the answers. The interlocutor affirms the lack of a sense object for *anusaya* but also maintains that the active defilements do have sense objects, even though both types of defilement are said to belong to the formations aggregate (*sankhāra*). This is what I referred to above as the bifurcation thesis, the view that the *sankhāra* aggregate is bifurcated into at least two types based on the kind of causal profile embodied by dispositional events and causally active ones.

The questioning continues as follows:

**Th:** Does sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?
M/S: Yes

Th: Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust, included in the formations aggregate lack a sense object, [while] sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?

M/S: Yes

Here we see the set up of an attempt to discredit the interlocutor’s position. The questioner forms their previous question as a conjunct of the previous set of questions in order to postulate a unity of a singular mental state with incommensurable parts, a posit that the interlocutor must deny.

Th: [So,] a portion of the formations aggregate has a sense object [and] a portion is without a sense object?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: So, a portion of the formations aggregate has a sense object and a portion does not have a sense object?

M/S: Yes

Th: Do the feeling, cognition, and consciousness aggregates have a sense object in a portion and lack a sense object in [another] portion?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Why might the interlocutor answer both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the same question here? The answer is subtle. One way to think about this is that there are different ways of reading ekadeso, in terms of a portion or part. One way to read it is to say that each sankhāra has multiple parts, one of which is anusaya another of which is pariyuṭṭhāna. One this reading of ekadeso, the interlocutor must answer ‘no’ on the grounds that it is not clear how a single momentary mental event could have two different causal profiles in its connection with other mental events and processes in the mental economy of the subject. However, insofar as we read ekadeso as a way of parsing types rather than than tokens of sankhāra, then it is plausible to answer ‘yes’ to this question on the grounds that some sankhāras arise with an active causal profile and some do not. Further, the interlocutor denies that this line of questioning
could apply to the other mental aggregates on the ground that they do not have the same causal profile as sankhāra. No feeling, cognition, or consciousness can arise in the system without some kind of occasioning cause on which it depends.

In the final question, we see the questioner generalize the line of inquiry we have been following thus far to include all of the other anusayas in the sevenfold formulation:

**Th:** Are the other underlying tendencies to anger, conceit, views, doubt, lust for becoming [and], ignorance without sense objects?

**M/S:** Yes.¹⁰⁷

The non-Theravādin defenders of the bifurcation thesis are forced to admit that there are different sorts of sankhāra operating at different times. In denying that sankhāra can be portioned out as having parts that do and do not take sensory objects, we introduce a distinction between latent sankhāra and explicitly active sankhāra. However, this should not trouble the proponent of the bifurcation view because the functional role of sankhāra is to kammically condition the stream of consciousness. The proponent of the bifurcation view is happy to take this on as it is an embodiment of their basic view. Thus, at this juncture, the Theravādin proponent hasn’t made any inroads in refuting their opponent.

I look at two more brief exchanges from the end of the chapter before concluding this section. Here we see the line of questioning reversed:

**M/S:** [You say that] It should not be spoken: ‘underlying tendencies are without sense objects?’

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¹⁰⁷ kāmarāgānusayo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇaṭi? āmantā. kāmarāgo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇaṭi? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... kāmarāgo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇaṭi? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇaṭi? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe .... kāmarāgānusayo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇaṭo, kāmarāgo sankhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇaṭo? āmantā. sankhārakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇaṭi? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... sankhārakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇaṭi? āmantā. vedanākkhandho saññākkhandho viññāṇakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇaṭi? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....
Th: Yes.

M/S: Should it be said of a worldling that ‘they have an underlying tendency’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

Th: Yes

The motivation for this line of questioning is the same as that which underlies the Buddha’s questioning of Malukyaputta with the parable of the infant. We need to find a philosophically principled way to affirm that one can remain ensnared in saṃsāra without affirming that every moment one is actively defiled by unwholesome mental states.

M/S: That being the case with respect to underlying tendencies, do they have a sense object?

Th: Surely one would not speak this way.

M/S: Because of this, underlying tendencies are without sense objects.

The argument here is that insofar as one wants to deny that one goes through mental states that have no explicit moral valence, then one should affirm the reality of anusaya as a means of explaining how it is that one is not liberated from defilements every time they have a morally indeterminate mental state.

Note, again the questioning switches and we conclude with an attempted *reductio ad absurdum*:

Th: Should it be said of a worldling that they are ‘lustful’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

M/S: Yes

Th: Then does lust have a sense object?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way

Th: Therefore, lust does not have a sense object.\(^{108}\)

\(^{108}\) *Na vattabbaṁ — “anusayā anārammaṇā”ti āmantā. puthujjano kusalābyākate citte vattamāne sāṃsayaṭṭi vattabbotī? āmantā. atthi tesam anusayānaṃ ārammaṇanti? na hevaṃ vattabbo ... pe ... tena hi anusayā*
This latter conclusion, that lust does not have a sense object is being attributed to the bifurcation proponent. This would be a disaster as both parties are agreed that sensual lust, as an active kammic force, does indeed have a sense object. If the bifurcation position entailed that it did not, then this position would be absurd from a Buddhist point of view. However, this conclusion is easily avoided.

The attribution of an affirmative answer to the first question of this section is a radically uncharitable one on the part of the Theravādin compilers. The straightforward answer for the Mahāsangika and Sammitiyas is to deny that worldlings are lustful when they are in indeterminate states. By denying this, the bifurcation proponent avoids the reductio with ease and is able to maintain that there are two ways in which mental states can condition the structure of the stream of consciousness. The first is to say that mental states can be conjoined with intentional objects to actively shape the stream of consciousness and the second is to say that in the absence of explicit solicitations from the perceptual field, mental states can predispose the subject to behave in certain ways. This reading makes the most sense of the basic fact that we can be prone to behave in certain ways without actively doing so and it provides a straightforward reading of the infant parable examined previously.

However, even if the non-Theravādin interloctutors win the day, there are two problems that they need to reckon with. Those were the two that I mentioned at the beginning of this section. First, it looks like the non-Theravādin position must abandon the view that there is only one thing happening in the mind at any given moment and that the duration of such mental events are themselves momentary. This is because the non-Theravādin position maintains that there are always anusaya kilesas tacitly conditioning the kammically active functioning of the mind even in the absence of a pariyutthana kilesa. If that’s right, then it is not possible that there is only one mental event happening at a time and it is unlikely that what is happening is only momentary as the need to maintain a diachronically extended affective bias is a key factor in the analysis. Second, how might we make...
sense of the reality of a disposition? This second question is harder to answer but I have already given some indications of how this might go in the third and fifth chapters. I shall more on this in the next section and the final chapter as well.

6.3 **Causation and Intention in the Making of the Buddhist Life-World**

In this final section, I will do two things. The first is to make some explicit connections between the philological reconstruction of the previous section with the philosophical task of providing a positive account of how the mind is affectively layered. Second, I will situate that account in a general consideration of one of the ways that Buddhist philosophy more generally can teach us about conceptualizing the nature of mind and its relation to its world.

The main motivation for our delving into the scholastic debates of the Theravādin Abhidhamma-piṭaka was to try and do better than James in thinking about the different ways that felt affect might condition our experience in various ways. Recall that in discussing the so-called ‘ejective’ centres of the mind, James gives up for practical reasons. I have tried to show that we have empirical and phenomenological reasons to reject James’s view, at least insofar as the latter demands of us that we ignore the deeper layers of affective mental processing.

The Buddhist position I have outlined here helps us shed light on the extent to which deep affective biases can be thought of as providing a tacit influence on the structure of our perspective on the world. Buddhist philosophers have the interesting, and perhaps unique, tendency to individuate mental states on the basis of their causal role, but without using that functional analysis as a reason to explain away, reduce, or otherwise ignore consciousness. Indeed, as I have stressed earlier, Buddhist philosophers persistently use categories that correspond to our notion of consciousness as fundamental relata in their causal analyses (e.g. *viññāṇa, vedanā, citta*). Insofar as moments of conscious awareness and their various cognitive elaborations are thought of as fundamental constituents of a causal order, it is reasonable to think about how those moments are causally related with other mental events that might condition them. Here, it is useful to redeploy a few useful distinctions we have used in the past. First, distinguish between phenomenal and access
consciousness, that is, between our experience, and our capacity to cognitively elaborate on and respond to the content of an experience. Further distinguish between those aspects of our phenomenally conscious experience that we in fact access and those that we do not access but remain, in principle, accessible. To these, add a third, the distinction between dispositional and occurrent mental events. Dispositions are things we are prone to do. Occurrent mental events are those which are actually occurring in the present moment. The view I am proposing is that affectively biasing states like anusayas should be thought of as phenomenally conscious events that are often not accessed but as still cognitively accessible.¹¹⁰

In terms of the problem-space I outlined in the last section, the Buddhists can be read as affirming a kind of identity between dispositions and occurrent mental states. All occurrent mental functionality contains a kind of biased habitual orientation that disposes the organism having that state to behave in the future in a way that is causally conditioned by the present. The arising of any mental event depends on the world being configured in a certain way. That way is spelled out causally in terms of a proper causal relation between the organism and its world. In virtue of this causal commerce, the organism becomes habitually disposed to take up the content of experience in ways that are in line with its personal and species-level history. Insofar as the latent dispositions can be said to have a causal influence at all, then they must be real in some way. Thus, I submit that affectively biasing states like anusayas should be thought of as often not accessed by our capacities for intentional action, speech, and thought, but as still being cognitively accessible in principle with the help of contemplative training (bhavānā). The ground for this suggestion is that if we individuate mental states (at least partially) on the basis of their causal profile (i.e. functionally), then it looks like deep affective states like anusaya can be understood as overflowing cognitive access as they have a different causal profile than kammically manifest defilements. The difference is specified in terms of the

¹¹⁰ In the case of the infant or other beings who do not have the capacities of cognitive access, the phenomenal character of their experience is not cognitively accessible.
elements present in the causal system responsible for the arising of such states. For *anusayas*, no perceptual object need be present for the state to exercise an influence over the continuity of the mental life of the subject.

This view shows how it is intelligible to think about affect having a pervasive, though not occurrently active, conditioning force on our habits of attention, thus influencing the contours of the salience map that organizes our phenomenal field. When I am walking down the street thinking about my philosophical ideas or the extent to which I am a philological dilettante compared to my Buddhist studies friends, I am not free from sensual lust and sexual arousal. Indeed, it is on account of those tacit tendencies being present in me, colouring my perceptual evaluations of the world in subtle ways, that when a sexually attractive person passes within my attentive purview, my cognitive musings on Buddhist soteriology evaporate and my visual perceptual attention is immediately recruited as I appreciate, in a respectful way, this beautiful person who is passing me by. Affective biases of various sorts are operating constantly on my perception and its interfacing with my cognition. It is in virtue of these operations that the world shows up to me as seeming a certain way, that certain parts of it are more salient to my perceptual attention than other parts. It is in having a certain predisposition to be sexually attracted to certain sorts of people that such people attract my attention when they pass by and others who do not, barely register as present at all. It is the push and pull of these affective biases that help to constitute my perspective on the world and the meaning of that world for me. These are the basic materials out of which the lifeworld is constructed.

The particular interest of the Buddhist conception of a meaningful lifeworld for this current discussion is that it does not make a strong distinction between causation and intention. Put another way, the relevant kind of causation for the Buddhist is always mental or intentional causation (*cetanā*) and resulting in bodily, verbal or mental actions (*kamma*). Classical phenomenological conceptions of the lifeworld often attempt to bracket out any consideration of the causal origin of our mental lives. For example, Heidegger’s (1927/1996) conception of *Dasein’s* being-in-the-world conceives of human experience as only being adequately described using a phenomenological ontology that is to be strictly distinguished from the causal analyses of the relevant sciences (biology and psychology). Even
Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2012) — which is novel in that it is one of the first phenomenological texts that engage directly with the relevant psychology of its time — is careful to adhere to a strong transcendental line of inquiry that brackets any discussion of the causal structure of experience, instead focusing on intentionality.

This distinction between intentional and causal analysis can also be framed in terms of a distinction between different images of the world. On the one hand, there is the ‘scientific image’ of the world which focuses on the causal story of how the world *works*. On the other, there is the ‘manifest image’ which is concerned with how things *appear*. I interpret Buddhist philosophy as eschewing this distinction. As Christian Coseru (2015) points out, the Buddhist concept of a world or *loke* is one that is irreducibly tied up with the feelings and cognitions of the subjects living in that world (SN I 95). Yet the connections that unite the subject to their meaningful world are always specified in terms of causes. At the same time, these causes are always specified in terms of *kamma* which definitionally recruits the intentions (*cetanā*) of the subjects who are living within the causal matrix (Heim 2013). Thus, philosophical analysis for the Buddhist takes place within the intentional structure of a subject oriented lifeworld, but one that is always carried out in the language of causation. Thus, the Buddhist perspective emphasizes the importance of motivated intentional causation as being the only medium through which the world (*loke*) is intelligible to us. On such a view, the intentional level of analysis and the causal level of analysis thoroughly interpenetrate, a point that phenomenologists later came to appreciate through their own phenomenological and existential analyses.

The motivation for proceeding in this way is problem-oriented. There is *dukkha* and this pervasive problem needs to be dealt with. The only way to deal with it is to analyze it. This analysis is carried out by utilizing the concept of causation. Thus, my contention is that one of the most interesting contributions that Buddhist philosophy can make to contemporary discussions of the mind, and consciousness in particular is twofold. First, Buddhist philosophy is not living in a world that requires it to overcome the allegedly insuperable gap between the manifest and scientific images. Because of this, it avoids certain metaphysical questions that detract from a more pragmatic philosophical project, namely the question of *dukkha*. This brings us to the second contribution. Buddhist philosophical
analysis of the mind provides us with an account of consciousness that is constantly perturbed in various ways. Thus, our consciousness is always affected in some way, either tacitly or explicitly and this colours of perspective on the world and ourselves. Because of this constant process of affective perturbation, and the biases in us that it constructs, we are often in error about what is good and bad for us, and because of this, we suffer. This suffering, this dukkha, is pervasive and often subtle, but its conditioning influence can be observed if we attend carefully enough. To do so skillfully, and thereby overcome the problematic influences embodied in these reactionary biases, is the heart of the Buddhist soteriological project.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have gone into some depth in reconstructing a debate between some schools of Indian Buddhism about the nature of the anusayas. I have argued, against the canonical Theravādin interpretation, that the anusyas are identical with explicitly morally valenced mental states. I have done so for two reasons. The first is to reconstruct a version of the Buddhist position that is more consistent with the Sutta material and more philosophically coherent given what we have learned about the pervasive and myriad influence of affect on our experience. The second is to show that the Buddhist philosophers have much to teach about the affective depths of the mind. In particular, their analysis of the different levels at which affect organizes the stream of consciousness is instructive for approaching these questions from the perspective of contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science. In the next chapter, I deepen my engagement with Buddhist philosophy by turning to an analysis of sentience and its relation to affective biasing. Then, in the final chapter, I apply these lessons to an analysis of the so-called ‘hard problem’ of consciousness (Chalmers 1996).
7
Affective Processing, Mental Continuity, and Sentience: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described.

William James from The Principles of Psychology Vol. I, p. 239

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that the Buddhist philosophers have a sophisticated view about the affective layers of the mind. A natural question that arises from that interpretive work, as well as the systematic view I developed in part I, of the dissertation is how we should think of this conditioning relation of affective bias in terms of its effect on consciousness. The purpose of this chapter is to pursue an answer to this question from within the Buddhist philosophical framework I have been developing over the last two chapters.

The Buddhists have a rich view of conscious events. Therefore, an analysis of this phenomenon is helpful not only for getting clear about the internal logic of a certain version of the Buddhist view, but also for informing our more general discussion of subjectivity. By analyzing the relation between affect and consciousness in a Buddhist register, we can start to answer important questions about mental continuity. These include questions like the following: How should we understand affective subjectivity as a temporal phenomenon? How, if at all, does the mind so conceived, fill time? In this chapter, I explore these questions by providing a reconstructive analysis of canonical Pāli texts from the Theravāda school of Buddhism and some commentaries on these from the early twentieth century Burmese monastic tradition. The Buddhist tradition has deep philosophical resources for thinking about the nature of how affect conditions subjectivity.

This chapter follows the previous one in that it offers an exegetical analysis of the standard Theravādin view and then takes a critical reconstructive approach to critique that view. More specifically, here I argue for a distinction between two kinds of continuity that are at work in explaining
the temporal structure of experience in Indian Buddhist philosophy. Call these two forms of continuity diachronic and affective-motivational continuity. My aim is to deepen my cross-cultural philosophical analysis of the deep structure of the mind and how affective processes below the ordinary threshold of ordinary habits of attention have a profound conditioning effect onoccurrent phenomenally conscious experience. My contention is that the canonical Theravāda Buddhist account developed by Buddhaghosa has the resources to explain diachronic continuity but not affective-motivational continuity. I then argue that the novel view of mental continuity offered by the early twentieth century Burmese monastic exegete Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) offers a much more promising account of mental continuity than Buddhaghosa’s, one that can help to explain the affective foundations of the continuity of mind.

Here is a breakdown of the argument that I will put forward; call it the argument for affective-motivational continuity (AM):

**AM**1. Our most basic kind of consciousness provides for a specific kind of continuity in our mental processing, call it affective-motivational continuity.

**AM**2. Our most basic kind of consciousness — the Buddhist philosophers I explore here call it ‘bhaavana-gacitta’ — is phenomenal.

**AM**3. Affective-motivational continuity is different from mere diachronic continuity.

**AM**4. If premises AM1-3 are true, then phenomenal consciousness has a special connection to our orientation and disposition to act or respond to the world.

**AM-C.** Phenomenal consciousness has a special connection to our orientation and disposition to act or respond to the world.

In this chapter, my aim is to establish that this argument is sound from within a Buddhist framework and that the Buddhists give us good reasons to think it is true. This argument is deeply isomorphic with the argument for affective action that I started developing in chapter 5 (I will return to that argument in chapter 8). My interpretation of the Buddhist position is important for providing my view with some necessary theoretical backbone. However, that the Buddhists think something is true, is not
definitive evidence in favor of its actually being true. Therefore, I will provide additional arguments in support of the conclusion of this argument in the final chapter.

In §7.1, I analyze Buddhaghosa’s account of the bhavaṅga citta, an important type of mental event in the taxonomy of mental kinds in Theravāda Abhidhamma literature. Here I will consider several motivations for positing the existence of such a mental event and explore the theoretical role this mental event has in the Abhidhammic system. Then in §7.2. I explore some inchoate indications that there is something like a bhavaṅga citta operating in the Suttas. It is here that I will provide arguments in favor of (AM1). I will then criticize the canonical account of the bhavaṅga on philosophical grounds in §7.3. There I explain why both (AM2) and (AM3) are true. Finally, in §7.4, I turn to an analysis of Ledi Sayadaw’s account of the bhavaṅga citta, wherein I will show that my reading of his account is not susceptible to the criticisms I lay out for the canonical view. It is here that I will provide reasons for endorsing (AM4). Because of this, I argue that my reading of Ledi’s position offers a more philosophically consistent version of the Buddhist notion of bhavaṅga citta, one that is more consonant with the reading of the Buddhist position I developed in the previous chapter, as well as subsequent developments in Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy, and finally, with contemporary cognitive science of consciousness as well (see chapter 3).

7.1 A Conceptual Analysis of the Canonical Account of the Bhavaṅga Citta

The canonical account of the bhavaṅga citta is found in Buddhaghosa’s commentaries on the Abhidhamma- and Sutta-piṭakas and his Visuddhimagga as well as the later Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha by Anuruddha. Here I provide an exegesis of what these texts have to say about the bhavaṅga citta. The bhavaṅga citta is a subliminal mental event that functions to sustain the causal continuity of the stream of consciousness when more ordinary sensory-cognitive events become dormant. Definitionally, the literal rendering of bhavaṅga is ‘factor of existence’. Nāṇamoli Bhikkhu translates

111 The Suttas are a different strata of Buddhist literature that purport to represent the actual words of the historical Buddha.
bhavaṅga as 'life-continuum' in his English edition of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. In this important text, Buddhaghosa refers to the *bhavaṅga citta* as a kind of 'stream' that flows in the absence of ordinary sensory cognitive functions (*Vis XIV*, 114). Peter Harvey's (1995, 161) etymological analysis suggests that we should think of *bhavaṅga* as a kind of becoming (*bhāva*). The *bhavaṅga* is only one type of *citta* amongst many others. The term ‘*citta*’ has multiple meanings. Its literal rendering is ‘mind’, ‘consciousness’ or ‘thought’. In the context of the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, as it is explained in the Suttas (DN II, 290; MN III 78), it refers to the overall affective frame of the mind. In the Abhidhamma literature it is a general term referring to conscious events. This latter context is the one I rely on here. A *citta* is a moment of phenomenal awareness.

The etymological root and operative metaphors used to describe the *bhavaṅga citta* are in tension with the metaphysics of the Abhidhamma. The metaphysics of the Theravāda Abhidhamma is one of momentary events and not continuous streams (Collins 1982; 248). Strictly speaking there are only punctate infinitesimal mental events. The tension arises from the fact that etymological analysis and consistent presence of water-metaphors indicate a temporally extended process, while the developed metaphysics of the system indicates momentary events. Given that this tension will be the main theme of the paper, I have elected to leave 'bhavaṅga' untranslated.

What is beyond dispute, is that for Buddhaghosa, the *bhavaṅga citta* is a primitive factor of mind that is related to basic sentience. It plays the functional role of guaranteeing the diachronic continuity of the mental continuum. The need for a diachronic stop-gap is evident from considering a few different contexts of atypical mental functioning in the Buddhist topography of the mind. Within the broader context of Indian philosophy as a whole, we can distinguish several types of conscious mental states. They are, waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, death and dying, and pure or luminous
conscious states (Thompson 2015). In Theravāda Abhidhamma, the bhavaṅga citta has an important role to play in all of these types of experiences.\textsuperscript{112}

In the waking state of perceiving and cognizing the world, the bhavaṅga citta arises at the end of a perceptual cycle, before a new one begins. In the Abhidhammic analysis of mental functioning there are a number of discrete events that occur following sensory or cognitive contact (phassa). These include a kind of basic sensory-modality specific discernment, followed by degrees of interpretation and recognition.\textsuperscript{113} Each act of perception or cognition is actually a causally connected cluster of momentary mental events. The bhavaṅga functions as a kind of stop-gap that arises between each event cluster of perceptual-cognitive engagement with the world. As a visual experience subsides, a series of bhavanga cittas arise, and as an auditory cluster begins, the bhavaṅga cittas are disturbed and then cease with the arising of subsequent sensory modality-specific cittas. These latter cittas then provide the informational basis for subsequent mental activity that work up the basic sensory data into something cognizable. The bhavaṅga citta is necessary in order to make sure the various sensory and cognitive event clusters that make up our ordinary waking state are continuous because there are gaps between each modality specific event cluster. The bhavaṅga citta fills these gaps.\textsuperscript{114}

In deep sleep, the situation is different. Buddhaghosa explains that, "...as long as there is no other kind of arising consciousness to interrupt the continuity, they [bhavanga cittas] also go on occurring endlessly in periods of dreamless sleep, etc., like the current of a river" (Vis XIV, 114). This is the one place where the bhavaṅga citta occurs in an uninterrupted series. Dreamless sleep is to be

\textsuperscript{112} My analysis closely follows Seven Collins’s chapter on bhavaṅga in Selfless Persons (1982, 240 ff.). I will take some issue with Collins’s analyses in §§7.3.2 and 7.3.3.

\textsuperscript{113} See Harvey (1995, 145-6) for a summary and visual representation of this process.

\textsuperscript{114} Gethin (1994, 29) points out that it’s not entirely clear why perceptual clusters would have gaps in the first place. Why not just have each cluster be continuous with the next? Why posit a lull between each? Gethin’s proposal is to think of bhavanga citta as individuating subjects as psychologically specific persons and members of their species. Thus, on this reading, there are specifically human bhavanga cittas. The idea here is that with every act of perception and cognition, the mind relaxes back into a passive state of mind that makes one the person and type of being that they are. As will become clear, my view is friendly to Gethin’s.
contrasted with drowsiness and dreaming sleep in that that the two latter states are still 'functioning' by having intentional objects (cf. Thompson 2015, 110-17). The following passage from the Milindapañha describes this contrast:

It is in the interval between being drowsy and not having yet reached the unconscious state [bhavaṅga citta] that one sees a dream. When a [person] is drowsy [their] mind is entering the unconscious state [bhavaṅga citta]; a mind that is entering the unconscious state does not function; a mind that is not functioning is not susceptible to happiness or suffering. There is no dream for one who is not susceptible. When the mind is functioning it sees a dream. As, sire, in dense darkness where there is no light, no shadow can be seen on even a well-burnished mirror, even so, sire, a mind that has entered the unconscious state is not functioning though it is in the physical frame. A mind that is not functioning does not see a dream. As the mirror, sire, so should the physical frame be understood, as the darkness sleep, as the light the mind.

(Miḷn VIII, 5; pp. 127-8)

There are some philosophical difficulties with this passage. Firstly, it is unclear how the term 'unconscious' is being used here. Secondly, and more importantly, equating the bhavaṅga citta with the 'darkness and sleep' where there is 'no light' is inconsistent with Buddhaghosa’s equation of bhavaṅga citta with the luminous mind. I will return to both of these points below. These difficulties aside, it is important to keep in mind that the bhavanga finds an uninterrupted continuity of occurrence once the more ordinary sensory-cognitive functions of mind subside in deep, dreamless sleep.

There is another state in the Buddhist taxonomies of mental events that is very much like deep sleep in that ordinary sensory-cognitive functions have subsided; this is the state of cessation of perception and feeling (saññā-vedayita-nirodha).115 In the Visuddhimagga, Buddhaghosa describes

115 Collins points out that there is a natural tendency to associate meditative cessation and dreamless sleep (1982, 245). From a more general Indian philosophical context, this association tends to be quite close (Thompson 2015). Nevertheless, the Theravāda texts maintain that there is good reason to think that these two states are importantly divergent.
the state of cessation is described as one in which, "...[a person] becomes without consciousness..." (Vis XXIII, 43). Further, "...when the bhikkhu does the preparatory task and then attains the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, then he achieves cessation, which is the other side, by becoming without consciousness" (Vis XXIII, 47). There seems to be a lack of mental functioning of any kind in this rarefied state, one which precludes a closer association of cessation with that of dreamless sleep. This is because in dreamless sleep the bhavaṅga citta arise and pass away in constant continuity. The issue is complex for two reasons. First, cessation is very close to the realization of nibbāna which is something that is experienced via the three knowledges of past lives, kammic destiny and the four noble truths. In Indian philosophy — and here Buddhism is no exception — consciousness and knowledge are closely linked. Liberating insight is therefore an experience and cannot occur in the absence of some consciousness. Thus, we might rightfully question the nature of that consciousness that ceases during saññā-vedayita-nirodha. This leads to the second point which is that the ambiguity here led some commentators to posit two types of viññāna operating here, the presence of one which might be compatible with the absence of the other (this is a point I return to in §7.3.1).

The fourth context for the positing of the bhavaṅga citta is death and rebirth. Leading up to the last cognitive event cluster before death, a bhavanga series is disturbed and then subsides as per the ordinary process of perception and thought. An important difference is that with the citta that arises after the one that explicitly registers death as its object, the bhavaṅga arises again in a new life right after the arising and passing away of the rebirth-linking consciousness (Collins 1982, 244; Gethin 1994, 20 ff). The function of the bhavaṅga in this context is thus no different from the process of perception and thought. However, it is informative to think about the fact that the first moment of citta for any newly arisen being is a bhavaṅga citta. Thus, there is a certain kind of primal continuity at the level of mere sentience that the bhavaṅga guarantees, though it does so in a way that is beyond
mere physical continuity as the *bhavaṅga* is a *citta*.\(^{116}\) Without some substratum of mind to fill in the gaps between discrete sensory-cognitive mental event clusters within and between lives, there would be no way for the *kammic* burden that drives the arising of consciousness to do its work. This is a point I will return to in what follows.

Lastly is the notion of the luminous mind, a feature of consciousness prevalent in many different accounts of mind in Indian philosophy (Thompson 2015). Luminosity in this context can be understood in two related ways. The first is that it is in virtue of the luminosity of the conscious mind that knowledge is possible. The conscious mind illuminates that which is not known such that it can become known. This notion of luminosity is metaphorical. Secondly, luminosity functions as a literal description of the mind purified of adventitious mental defilements. This is the result of a process of purification whereby one cultivates proficiency in a series of contemplative exercises focused on honing the mind’s capacity for skillful attention. By redirecting the mind towards its own functions and developing the capacity for detachment and calm, the defilements eventually drop away resulting in a quality of luminosity to arise in the mind.

There are some tantalizing passages from the Anguttara Nikāya that fit the above two-fold description of luminous consciousness (cf. Harvey 1995, 166 ff). Consider the following from the Book of Ones (AN I 10):

Luminous, bhikkhus, is the mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The uninstructed worldling does not understand this as it really is; therefore I say that for the uninstructed worldling there is no development of the mind.

Luminous, bhikkhus, is the mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore I say that for the instructed noble disciple there is development of the mind.

\(^{116}\) However, this raises a question as to how this *citta* should be characterized first-personally. I address this question in §7.3.1
Recognition of the luminous nature of mind is here identified with the difference between a developed mind and an undeveloped mind, a noble disciple and an uninstructed worldling. In order to become a noble disciple, one must achieve some degree of liberation. From the Buddhist perspective, liberation means attaining to one of the four levels of sanctity. These are specified in terms of ten unwholesome qualities or fetters (samyojana), clusters of which are abandoned in a progressive way as one makes progress in contemplative insight. Therefore, recognition of the luminous nature of mind is related in some deep respect to the realization of the cessation of dukkha, namely nibbāna. This luminous mind is explicitly identified with bhavaṅga citta in Buddhaghosa's commentary on this Nikāya (Collins 1982) and in his commentary on the Dhammasangani: "Mind also is said to be 'clear' in the sense of 'exceedingly pure,' with reference to the subconscious life-continuum" (Asl. Part IV: Ch. II: 4, 185). Whether we read these references to luminosity in terms of the metaphor of knowledge gained through insight and concentration or as literal descriptions of the minds qualities, such considerations of consciousness and luminosity are important for criticizing the view that in meditative absorption that is approaching liberation all consciousness is extinguished.

In summary, I have shown that the standard analysis of the bhavaṅga citta is centred on the issue of the diachronic continuity of mind. However, there remains the issue of the mind’s true nature being occluded by defilements and the means by which this occlusion can be overcome. Understanding how this purificatory process works in relation to the mind’s luminosity is important for the development of my critical assessment of the canonical account of the bhavaṅga citta in §7.3.

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117 Ven. Anālayo Bhikkhu points out (in personal correspondence and in a forthcoming paper) that these references to luminosity are not present in the āgama parallels. He takes this lack of parallelism to indicate that luminosity should not be associated with awakening in early Buddhism but only with the later commentarial tradition. This is plausible if we confine our analysis of luminosity to the literal sense of the mind being luminous, but perhaps not so if we keep to the figurative sense of luminosity as a metaphor for knowledge. This is because awakening is preceded by various knowledges and itself is a special kind of knowledge of the unconditioned element (nibbāna).
7.2 The Origins of the Bhavaṅga Citta

Getting a grip on the purificatory process demands that we explore the origins of the bhavaṅga citta in more detail. I will make good on this demand by looking at how this mental posit is prefigured in some ambiguous passages in the Sutta material. There are two different ways that I want to approach the origins question, one philosophical, one exegetical. They are really two sides of one genealogical coin. The philosophical approach has been foreshadowed in some of what I have said already. Namely, the bhavaṅga citta was posited by the Abhidhamma commentators in order to fulfill certain functions in the fleshed-out theory of mind that those Theravāda philosophers were attempting to articulate.\(^{118}\) The most basic of these functions, as we have seen, is to guarantee causal continuity in the chain of mental events that constitutes a life.

We saw that the bhavaṅga citta plays this role in a number of different contexts. However, the extent to which the arising of such a mental event discharges a functional role in the Abhidhammic theory of mind is also related to complex questions about what the Abhidhammic theory of mind is trying to do as a whole. The most straightforward answer to this latter question is that the Abhidhammic system is trying to philosophically systematize views contained in the Sutta-piṭaka. The relation between these two strata of texts is often unclear. This fact motivates my exegetical approach to analyze the bhavaṅga citta in terms of Sutta-level ambiguities that may have motivated the Abhidharmika systemetizers to posit such a citta in order to resolve confusions.

Peter Harvey (1995) points out that there is some reason to think that the Suttas have no place for a citta that is different from the standard six-fold analysis of consciousness (155-6). The standard six-fold analysis claims that consciousness is exhausted by its intentional content, which can be specified according to the five sensory modalities and a sixth cognitive modality (MN I 259-60; Gethin

\(^{118}\) If one were to comb through the Abhidhamma piṭaka in search of traces of bhavaṅga citta, one would find only a few vague references in the Patthana (CR. Vol. I, 149). As a developed theory, the bhavaṅga citta is clearly a phenomenon of the commentaries. However, there is quite a bit of evidence to suggest that at least some of its conceptual origins are to be found in the Sutta material. I will treat of this evidence in the current section.
However, the fire imagery that dominates analyses of the causal interaction between mind and world in the Suttas is based on a wider context, originating in the *Upanishads*, in which this particular element has a latent form (Harvey 1995, 156–7). The idea here is that even when the fire element is not manifest, there is a latent form of fire that continues to persist. Therefore, insofar as the fire imagery applies to the common six-fold analysis of consciousness also, there seems to be room for the idea that there is a latent form of consciousness, distinct from the standard six-fold sensory-cognitive account. This is however not a positive indication of there actually being a subliminal form of consciousness present in the Suttas. It is merely an exegetical claim that there being such a form of consciousness is not inconsistent with the Buddhist position insofar as it can be thought of in the context of Indian philosophy more generally.

In addition to this general departure point for thinking about the *bhavaṅga citta* in the context of the Suttas, there are three more specific contexts that need to be considered. These issues are importantly different from the five preceding explanatory contexts that I explored in the last section. Positing latent mental functions goes beyond the need to guarantee mere diachronic continuity to include issues of motivation, affective bias, and dukkha. For Buddhist philosophy, the arising of consciousness must be understood in the context of being occasioned by kammic fuel through sankhāric reactions of various sorts.

The first point is related to the ten-point formulation of *paṭicca-samuppāda* or dependent origination, the Buddhist view about how the psycho-physical system is causally integrated. The first link of the ten-point’ formulation says: *viññāṇa-paccaya nama-rūpaṃ*; in English, this means that the condition for the arising of psycho-physical system (literally: name-and-from) is consciousness. In the ten-point formulation, this link functions in a bi-conditional way. Not only does *nama-rūpa* function as a condition for the arising of consciousness, but the reverse is also true as well, *nama-rūpa paccaya viññāṇaṃ*:

I have said: 'Consciousness conditions mind-and-body.' ... If consciousness were not to come into the mother's womb, would mind-and-body develop there.' 'No, Lord.'
Or, if consciousness, having entered the mother’s womb were to be deflected, would mind-and-body come to birth in this life? 'No, Lord.' 'And if the consciousness of such a tender young being, boy or girl, were thus cut off, would mind-and-body grow, develop and mature?' 'No, Lord.' 'Therefore, Ānanda, just this namely consciousness, is the root, the cause, the origin, the condition of mind-and-body.

I have said: 'Mind-and-body conditions consciousness.' ... if consciousness did not find a resting-place in mind-and-body, would there subsequently be an arising and coming-to-be of birth, aging, death and suffering? 'No, Lord.' 'Therefore, Ānanda, just this, namely mind-and-body, is the root, the cause, the origin, the condition of consciousness. Thus far, then, Ānanda, we can trace birth and decay, death and falling into other states and being reborn, thus far extends the way of designation...namely to mind-and-body together with consciousness.

(DN II 66)\(^{119}\)

In order to understand how this bi-conditionality relation bears on the question of whether or not the commentators had good Sutta-based motives to posit a bhavaṅga citta, we must first understand the nature of nama-rūpa. In the Nidānavagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha defines nama-rūpa in the following way: "Feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention: this is called name. The four great elements and the form derived from the four great elements: this is called form. Thus, this name and this form are together called name-and-form" (SN II 2). Essentially, nama is the three non-conscious mental aggregates, with volition (cetanā) and attention (manasikāra) standing in for saṅkhāra, combined with the organism’s basic sensitivity to the world (phassa).

The bi-conditionality of nama-rūpa and viññāṇa suggests a possible equivocation in the text. Viññāṇa seems to be deployed in two different ways. The first is a kind of primitive sentience or primal

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\(^{119}\) See also, SN II 104 and Thompson (2015, 24)
consciousness that functions as the condition for the arising of nama-rūpa. The second is the more familiar notion of viññāṇa as the episodic causal upshot of contact between sensory receptors and their objects (Waldron 2003, 12). If the six-fold account of consciousness requires sensory contact as its condition, then a fully functioning nama-rūpa must be in place because contact (phassa) is a constituent of nama. However, we have seen that there is a form of consciousness that functions as the condition for the development of nama-rūpa. Therefore, some other form of consciousness beyond the six-fold must play this role. Such a consciousness would clearly correspond to something like the bhavaṅga citta. The idea that our capacity for sensory-cognitive-affective interaction with the world (nama) and the physical form in which those capacities are embodied (rūpa) have a basic consciousness as their condition is a strong indicator of a primitive life-continuum consciousness being indicated in this stratum of the texts.

The second context which seems to indicate some kind of latent mental process is found in the Cūḷavedella Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (I 303). It is here that we will start to get a grip on why Buddhist philosophers ought to endorse (AM1), namely that:

AM1. Our most basic kind of consciousness provides for a specific kind of continuity in our mental processing, call it affective-motivational continuity.

In this discourse, an arahant bhikkhunī called Dhammadinnā is questioned by Visākha, her former husband, on a number of topics. The most important of these, for our present purposes, is anusayā. As we saw in the previous chapter, this term can be translated in a number of ways; I continue to use 'latent defilements' or 'underlying tendencies'. Both refer to an inherent habit of the mind to constantly react in a tacit way to occurrent feelings or sensations (vedanā). Whenever a pleasant feeling arises

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120 In contemporary discussion, this kind of mentality has been called 'the feeling of being alive'. This latter term refers to a general sense of awareness, often thought to be grounded in our sense of affective bodily subjectivity (Craig 2010; Damasio 1999; Thompson 2007). The comparison here is apt insofar as both notions refer to a basic sentience. The comparison is a stretch insofar as for Buddhist philosophers, primal viññāṇa is not physical in any way. From an Abhidhammic perspective, it would probably be fair to call the Buddhists event or trope dualists. However, the contemporary notion of the 'feeling of being alive' is intrinsically linked to the body.
within the framework of the body or mind, it does so in dependence on sensory contact (*phassa paccaya-vedanā*), but in so arising, the occurrent feeling-sensation also occasions an underlying *sankhāric* tendency in the mind.

These tendencies are defined according to how the occurrent feeling tends to encourage or actively solicit certain types of reactions which are common to the various kinds of feelings that we have. Thus, Dhammadinā explains that, "...the underlying tendency to lust underlies pleasant feeling. The underlying tendency to aversion underlies painful feeling. The underlying tendency to ignorance underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling" (MN I 303). Such tendencies have not yet been abandoned in the mental continuum even though they are not occurrently active with regard to a subject's present mental state. Secondly, in spite of their non-active nature, *anusaya* are capable of becoming active and thus arising as explicit afflictions (*kilesas*) when a suitable cause is present (Bodhi 2005, 1243, fn. 473). If that is right, *anusaya* have no other role to play except to tacitly condition *cittas*, whether *bhavaṅga* or otherwise. According to the Buddha, this eradication of the *anusayas* is the equivalent of achieving the cessation of *dukkha* (AN IV 9). This refinement and purification of mind is necessary because of its conditioning by *anusaya*. Thus, the diachronic continuity of mind is not merely causal, but is stitched together into a flow by our affectively biased dispositions.

The third example of *viññāṇa* beyond the six-fold base is *viññāṇam anidassanam* (MN I 326; DN I 211). Discussion of this special mental event arises in the context of the Buddha explaining his capacity to discern something that is beyond the 'allness of the all'. 'All' here refers to the world of sensory-cognitive objects and our faculties for perceiving them. Beyond these there is a, "Consciousness non-manifesting, boundless, luminous all-round" (MN I 330). In his translation of the Kevaddha Sutta (DN I 211) from the Digha Nikāya, Maurice Walshe translates the same passage which comes in response to the following question (DN I 223):

Where do earth, water, fire and air no footing find?
Where are long and short, small and great, fair and foul -
Where are 'name-and-form' wholly destroyed?
His translation of the answer is the following: "Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous..." (DN I 223). There is a form of consciousness that is beyond the province of nama-rūpa. Further, this consciousness seems to be implicated in an achievement that allows one to see through the totality of conditioned phenomena. Therefore, it is likely to be associated with that mind state of a fully liberated being who is experiencing nibbāna (cf. Bodhi, 1995, fn. 513, pp. 1249 ff).  

In conclusion, it is worth noting again an important asymmetry between these three examples of latent mental processes that indicate something like a notion of bhavaṅga citta operating in the Suttas and the fivefold context for the positing of bhavaṅga citta that we explored in §7.1. In the case of the five-fold criteria, the functional role of the bhavaṅga citta is to provide a stop-gap in the diachronic continuity of the mental continuum. The sentience reading of viññāṇa, the reality of anusaya, and the notion of 'consciousness without surface' demonstrate that there is more than mere diachronic continuity operating in the temporal structure of the mind. In addition to diachronic continuity, the mind is also motivationally continuous and affectively deep in virtue of its capacity to carry kammic charge and its potential to be purified of unwholesome mental defilements.

7.3 Philosophical Problems with the Canonical Account of the Bhavaṅga Citta

In this section I engage in a critical analysis of the canonical notion of bhavanga citta. First, I explore an ambiguity regarding the kind of mental event it is. After resolving this issue, I explain the difference between two kinds of mental continuity, diachronic and affective-motivational. I have already given some indication as to why our basic understanding of mental continuity, from a Buddhist philosophical point of view, should be grounded in affect and motivation. I will now make this connection clear by contrasting this approach to a prevalent reading of the canonical scholasticism of the Abhidhamma texts (Collins 1982). This criticism will then motivate my consideration of Ledi

\[\text{\textsuperscript{121}}\] Norman (1987) points out that it is likely that pabhaṃ or 'luminous' is likely transformed from pahāṃ, 'to give up'. References to luminosity are absent in the āgama parallels to this Sutta. Thus, the explicit association of luminosity and consciousness can be questioned from the standpoint of trying to articulate the early Buddhist position. Neverthless, there is no doubt that the Buddhaghosa took this association to be absolutely central. My thanks to Anālayo Bhikkhu for discussion on this matter and for access to an as-yet unpublished manuscript.
Sayadaw’s view of the bhavaṅga citta in §7.4. I shall argue that Ledi’s account is not susceptible to the criticisms I will lay out for the canonical view in what follows.

7.3.1 What Kind of Mental Event is the Bhavaṅga Citta?

In this subsection, I will provide some reasons internal to the Buddhist philosophical dialectic to think that (AM2) is true. Recall that the second premise of the (AM) argument is:

AM2. For the Buddhists, our most basic kind of consciousness — the Buddhist philosophers I explore here call it ‘bhavaṅga citta’ — is phenomenal.

Bhavaṅga citta is often translated as sub- or un-conscious but is also a citta associated with the luminosity of the mind in the commentaries. So, we can ask the more specific question, is bhavaṅga citta conscious or unconscious? In order to understand the answer to this latter question, we must define our terms. I propose a contemporary taxonomy that is commonly used by philosophers of mind to differentiate between two important senses of ’conscious’: namely, Ned Block’s (1995) distinction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. These two senses of ’conscious' will help us get clear about the actual nature of bhavaṅga citta and to resolve some outstanding questions regarding luminosity and the development of mind in Buddhist philosophical psychology.

Recall that access consciousness is a dispositional notion that refers to information being poised for use in different forms of cognitive processing. A mental state is A-conscious if its content is one or all of the following: poised for use as a premise in an inference, poised for use in the rational control of action, and/or poised for rational control of speech (Block 1995; 231). By contrast, a mental state is phenomenally conscious if and only if there is something it is like for a subject to be in that state (Nagel 1974). As Block puts it, ”P-conscious states are experiential...The totality of the experiential properties of a state are ’what it is like' to have it” (Block 1995; 230). How does this important distinction relate to the bhavaṅga citta? In order to answer this question, we must understand a second distinction between mental states that are conscious and unconscious. As I mentioned, the bhavaṅga citta — as well as its Mahayanic counterpart, the ālaya-vijñāna — are often characterized as ’unconscious’ mental states (cf. Waldron 2003, Collins 1982, and N.K.G. Mendis’s
Unconscious in what sense? What kind of consciousness is being denied to such states? From the texts we have examined so far, it is not obvious. For example, Collins claims: "Certainly, the bhavaṅga is a mental but not conscious phenomenon" (1982, 243). We should understand the unconscious nature of bhavaṅga in terms of access. During periods of bhavaṅga citta ordinary sensory and cognitive processing has subsided completely. However, insofar as bhavaṅga is a citta, it is discerning and luminous. Therefore, it would be an error to say that it is unconscious in the phenomenal sense of the term 'conscious'. We should read references to the 'unconscious' in Buddhist accounts of the bhavaṅga citta in terms of access consciousness.

Further, I argue that we should interpret bhavaṅga citta as being definitionally experiential; it is luminous and knowing (cf. Thompson 2015, 3 ff). As Harvey explains: "One cannot see bhavaṅga as 'unconscious' ... for although it occurs in dreamless sleep, it is seen as having an object, and as being a form of discernment or citta" (1995, 161). This final remark about bhavaṅga citta having an object is a bit quick. In Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga, in the fourteenth chapter on the five aggregates, he mentions that, “When the rebirth-linking consciousness has ceased, then, following on whatever kind of rebirth linking it may be, the same kinds, being the result of the same kamma whatever it may be, occur as life-continuum consciousness with that same object...” (Vis XIV, 114). This citation clearly states that the bhavaṅga citta has an object, in this case, that which is associated with death in the previous life. In the other contexts we have explored, we have seen that the bhavaṅga citta doesn’t have any proper intentional object. So, this seems like a special case.

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122 Collins goes on to differentiate his ambiguous notion of unconscious from a Freudian use of the term. The main conceptual axis he uses to effect this distinction is one between motivation and mere continuity. He claims that the bhavaṅga citta has no motivational role to play, which makes it importantly distinct from its Freudian counterpart. I will have an occasion to return to this point in §7.3.2.
What kind of object should we understand bhavaṅga citta to have? This is not an easy question to answer given that this kind of mental event is so subliminal. Perhaps it is some kind of repressed memory of the previous life, or some kind of felt bodily sense of one’s own mortality. In either case, the bhavaṅga citta does not have an object in the ordinary sense. Nevertheless, we still have a good reason to think of bhavaṅga citta as a phenomenal kind in light of its discerning nature, one that sustains the continuity of mind when normal sensory-cognitive functions are dormant, as in deep sleep.

In spite of many contemporary philosophers defining consciousness as that which ceases with deep sleep and begins again upon waking (Searle 1992), this is not how Indian philosophers tended to see the phenomenon, and certainly not Buddhaghosa. The idea that we are phenomenally conscious in deep sleep is a commonly held view in Indian philosophy (Thompson 2015). If there is a subtle form of phenomenal awareness that persists through deep sleep, then we would be forced to identify it with the bhavaṅga citta because it is this citta and no other that is solely responsible for the continuity of mind during deep sleep (Vis XIV, 114).

In moving forward, I will use the terms 'unconscious', 'subconscious', 'latent', and 'subtle' to refer to the idea that there are mental states, specifically bhavaṅga cittas, that are phenomenally conscious but not access conscious. This is not to say that such states cannot be made access conscious. It might be possible that certain states that would otherwise remain outside the purview of cognitive access might be in principle accessible. Indeed, one way of construing much of the soteriological thrust of Indian philosophy in general, and especially Buddhist philosophy, is precisely in these terms:

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123 Rupert Gethin (1994) argues that bhavaṅga citta is fully intentional and always has an object. His argument stems from the definition of citta as that which has an object (Asl. Part II: 84-5). However, citta is also defined as that which arises in a stream or series. Since this citta is a special kind, it is not clear that it inherits the full complex intentional structure of those cittas that are part of the ordinary clustering of experience. In either case, my objections to the canonical account do not hang on the correctness of Gethin’s treatment. However, it is worth nothing that the primary texts are ambiguous enough to motivate serious disagreement among scholars about how robust the intentional structure of this particular citta is.
One way to think about the Indian yogic idea of subtle consciousness is to see it as pointing to deeper levels of phenomenal consciousness to which we don't ordinarily have cognitive access, especially if our minds are restless and untrained in meditation. According to this way of thinking...much of what Western science and philosophy would describe as unconscious might qualify as conscious, in the sense of involving subtle levels of phenomenal awareness that could be made accessible through meditative mental training.

(Thompson 2015, 8)

Having completed my reconstructive analysis of the bhavaṅga citta, I am now in a position to deepen my critical engagement with the canonical view.

7.3.2 From Diachronic to Affective-Motivational Continuity

Here I argue for the third premise of this chapter’s main argument. Namely, that affective-motivational continuity is different from mere diachronic continuity. In his reading of the canonical Abhidhamma view, Collins (1982) distinguishes between descriptive and topographical accounts of mental events. A mental event $E$ is descriptive in nature if we are obliged to assume it exists or are able to infer its existence by observable effects. A mental event $E_2$ is topographical if it has reality in its own right, not just as a posit, but as a 'province of its own'. One way to think about this is that such a 'province' of the mind is capable of being experienced from the first-person perspective through the cultivation of careful attention. Collins goes on to claim that: "Insofar as the Buddhist concept of bhavaṅga might be thought of as being part of a topographical account of mind, it is so only in relation to a systematic account of perception, and not of motivation" (Collins 1982, 244). The reason that Collins thinks this is that he confines his analysis of the functional role of bhavaṅga to the five-fold analysis considered earlier. On this view, this citta is a kammically inert stop-gap and nothing more. I think that if we expand our account to include the three aspects considered at the end of §7.2, that this reading will be seen as untenable and (pardon the pun), under-motivated.

The process of perception and cognition in Buddhist philosophy is inseparable from the motivations and affective biases that influence the mind (Davis and Thompson 2015). The arising of consciousness at any given moment is the immediate causal upshot of contact at a sensory receptor
and reactive saṅkhāric processes that motivate and give kammic charge to each moment of consciousness. In the terms of contemporary cognitive science, we can understand saṅkhāras as, 
"...implicit and habitual processing routines that shape how we perceive and behave and that typically escape explicit, cognitive awareness" (Davis and Thompson 2013, 588). The continuity of mind in Buddhist thought is irreducibly motivational or affectively biased. This is because the mental continuum, and the world of meaning that it is kammically bound up with, are tied together in a knot of existential angst that is at the heart of the problem of dukkha.

What we perceive is not separate from what we crave because our cravings direct and condition our intentions (cetanā) and this affects what we do and therefore what we perceive. This is why the Buddha equates cetanā with kamma (AN III 415). It is our intentions that actively shape our futures. When our intentions are conditioned by craving, then our futures will be fraught with dukkha as craving is the cause of dukkha (SN V 420). Thus, in response to the following epithet from the Buddha: "Bhikkhus, I saw that the end of the world cannot be known, seen, or reached by travelling. Yet, bhikkhus, I also say that without reaching the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering" (SN I 95), the venerable Ānanda provided the following explanation to a group of perplexed bhikkhus:

"That in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world-this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline" (ibid). The loke or world with which we are engaged is not one that is separable from our powers of perception and cognition. Indeed, Ānanda expands this when developing his explanation by applying it to the six-fold basis of perception and cognition (saḷāyatana):

And what, friends, is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world? The eye is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ...The body ... The mind is that in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world. That in the world by which one is a perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world - this is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline (ibid).124

124 Cited by Coseru (2015, 229)
Passages such as this one has led some contemporary philosophers to liken the Buddhist model of mind-world interaction to Husserl's notion of the *Lebenswelt* or life-world (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 2001; Coseru 2012, 2015; Husserl 1970). The overlap here consists in the fact that the world that we perceive as outside of ourselves is still deeply connected to us in virtue of the organization of our living body and the sensory-cognitive-affective interactions it affords. Such interactions are inseparable from the *kammically* active mental activities that drive our physical, verbal, and mental actions.¹²⁵

Consider another example of this self-world entanglement, Dhammadinā’s three-fold analysis of *sankhāras* in her discussion with Visākha: "In-breathing and out-breathing, friend Visākha, are the bodily formation; applied thought and sustained thought are the verbal formation; perception and feeling are the mental formation" (MN I 301). It is important to bear in mind here that *sankhāras* (along with *phassa*), are the condition for the arising of all consciousness. Such conditions ramify through all levels of the organism, from speech and abstract cognition all the way down to life-regulation processes like respiration.¹²⁶ The latter of these is an absolutely central gateway for meditative development, precisely because of the way in which it provides the contemplative with a point of experiential access to the complex and reciprocal causal dynamics that exist between the living body and the latent reactive processes of the mind (*sankhāra, anusaya*) that cause consciousness to arise (cf. MN III 79.).

¹²⁵ The Abhidhamnikas would of course have no objection to this reading of the basic thrust of Buddhist soteriology. The issue at hand is whether their fully worked out taxonomy of causally connected mental events is capable of adequately explaining the Buddhist view when it is framed in this way. I am arguing that they cannot.

¹²⁶ Anālayo (2006) points out that the notion of *sankhāra* appears in at least three different contexts in the suttas. The first is as the fourth of the five aggregates, the second is as the second link in the twelve-point formulation of dependent origination — it is here, that *sankhāra* is mentioned explicitly as being a condition for the arising of consciousness — and third, as a general notion for anything conditioned. I understand these differences in terms of emphasis and context rather than as kinds. Thus, even though the threefold schema I cite from MN I 301 does not explicitly mention the conditional relation between *sankhāra* and consciousness, it is common sense that when *sankhāras* arise at the level of body, speech, or mind, subsequent moments of consciousness will be conditioned by those reactions.
A third point returns to our previous discussion of the luminous mind (AN I 10). Recall that Buddhaghosa identifies this luminous mind with the bhavaṅga citta. Recall also, that the luminous mind is, 'defiled by adventitious defilements'. In a lengthy footnote to his translation of this passage, Bhikkhu Bodhi points out that there is a tension at work here in the claim that the mind is both pure and luminous as well as defiled (by that which is adventitious). The tension arises because elsewhere it is also claimed that 'there is no first beginning' to ignorance and craving (AN V 113-120). Therefore, it seems like ignorance and craving are fundamental features of the mind present in the beginningless cycles of samsāric time. The question is if the Buddhists can have it both ways.

The commentaries allege that the defilements occur only at the kammically active stage of javana. This is the stage in the perceptual process that comes after the arising of bhāvaṅga, advertence to the object impinging on the relevant sensory receptor, and a sensory-modality specific moment of consciousness. The javana stage is where the arising of cittas becomes explicitly morally valenced. In his commentary on §8 of chapter III of the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, Bhikkhu Bodhi explains: "The javana stage is the most important from an ethical standpoint, for it is at this point that wholesome or unwholesome cittas originate" (Bodhi 1999, 124). Thus, the orthodox Abhidhamma explanation of the tension between intrinsic luminosity and beginningless defilement is that the latter is located exclusively at the level of javana, leaving the bhavaṅga undefiled. However, this is problematic as clearly the potential for defilement must be carried on in each successive stage of mental goings-on so that such potential may or may not be actualized by presently occurring causes. Since the bhavaṅga citta is the first moment of consciousness that arises in a new life, it must contain within it the latent defilements that were the cause of the previous life not being fully emancipated from samsāra. Therefore, a strict separation between the two seems like a poor starting place.

Bhikkhu Bodhi's explanation tries to circumvent this difficulty in the following way:

...luminosity is an innate characteristic of mind, seen in its capacity to illuminate its objective field. This luminosity, though inherent, is functionally blocked because the mind is 'defiled by adventitious defilements' (āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkilittṭham). The defilements are called 'adventitious' because, unlike the luminosity, they are not
intrinsic to the mind itself...these defilements can be removed by mental training. With their removal, the mind's intrinsic luminosity emerges - or, more precisely, becomes manifest.

(Bodhi 2012, 1597-8, fn. 46)

I do not think this explanation works on its own. We need to revert back to the twofold reading of luminosity we began with. Recall that luminosity can be understood figuratively as a way of describing the epistemic function of consciousness on the one hand, and as a literal description of the mind's character on the other. It seems to me that we should abandon the second reading in terms of attributing an intrinsic quality to primordial consciousness.

The arising and passing away of bhavaṅga cittas cannot be understood in isolation from the deep motivational psychology that animates the arising of conscious states of various kinds. This is because even if we locate the defilements of the mind at the level of javana cittas, we must still account for their latent potentiality that is made actual at this stage of the perceptual process: "It is in the javana phase that the defilements, dormant in the subconscious bhāvaṅga, infiltrate mental activity and defile the mind" (ibid). Therefore, insofar as the arising of conscious states are conditioned by reactive complexes and the former can itself be a condition for the arising of the nama-rūpa, we cannot divorce the question of diachronic continuity from kammically active motivational and affectively biased reaction complexes. This means that it is impossible for bhavaṅga cittas to be intrinsically undefiled and luminous, in the emancipated sense of the latter term. There is no level in the mind at which the occurrence of a mental event is merely a stop-gap. The affectively biased kammic charge of past experience must be borne by whatever mental event is arising at a given time. Therefore, it makes more sense to deny intrinsic luminosity to bhavaṅga cittas and instead affirm the idea that this luminosity can develop with training. Consider a diamond and its crystalline beauty. Does it make sense to attribute that luminous quality to the carbon molecules that spent millions of years being compacted by appropriate conditions to yield the diamond? Of course, not. Similarly, it makes more
sense to affirm that consciousness is by its nature something conditioned and biased which can then be refined and emancipated by a proper course of training.\footnote{This line of reasoning of course cuts against many developments in later Buddhist philosophy, but it is enough to show that it is philosophically consistent with this stratum of texts.}

7.3.3 From Affective-Motivational Continuity to Diachronic Unity

A further problem now arises, namely, 	extit{in virtue of what can we claim that defilements are 'dormant' in the bhavaṅga citta?} In addition to diachronic continuity and synchronic unity, we must also embrace some form of diachronic unity in the mind. I think this is necessary if the temporally distended associative complexes that condition the arising of consciousness are to be properly understood. If this claim is right, then the idea that the bhavaṅga citta or something like it is only a stop-gap that arises only when other mental factors shut down becomes problematic on a philosophical level.

The necessity of some form of diachronic unity to stabilize the non-linear patterns of affective bias in the motivational substratum of mind can be seen by considering the role that kamma plays in conditioning the present moment. This is put succinctly by William Waldron in the following passage: "The paths our continued embodied existence take are directed by the accumulated results of our past actions, which are continually reinforced - which increase and 'grow' - by our afflicted activities in the present, which themselves are deeply informed by the underlying currents of our various dispositions" (Waldron 2003, 24). Moreover, if we think of these processes within the framework of the stream metaphor for consciousness (Vis XIV, 114; James 1890/1950), we can follow Waldron further.

Extending the stream metaphor, Waldron continues: "...contoured by these banks [of saṅkhāric dispositions], our stream of consciousness continuously flows with both the bubbling surface of its swift churning waters and the deeper, hidden currents flowing beneath its surface - both of which subtly yet continuously make their mark upon the contours of that very riverbed and its banks..." (ibid). The limited diachronic unity of the mind is to be accounted for by the fact that there are multiple
forms of conditioning that are jointly sufficient for the arising of consciousness operating simultaneously, not serially.

The nature of our present experience is a product not just of the sensory contact with present objects but also of latent reactive tendencies that condition the way in which our perception and cognition of the world is tinged by our preferences and habits. Our current experience does not oscillate back and forth between these two conditions, one moment of consciousness arising in dependence on a sankhāric reaction complex, one arising due to causal contact with an object in the world. Our sankhāric dispositions motivate our perceptual attention and this conditions the kinds of things we see. Reciprocally, current perception primes subsequent goal formation by conditioning our expectations. Thus, the two conditions for the arising of consciousness (sankhāra and phassa) cannot be completely disentangled in the way a purely Abhidhammic reading of bhavaṅga citta seems to demand. Even in the absence of explicitly defiled intentions, one is still not free from dukkha because of the underlying tendencies in the mind (anusayas): "If, bhikkhus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but one still has a tendency towards something, this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness....Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering" (SN II 65). It is only once the anusayas are fully eradicated through contemplative development that one is truly freed from dukkha.

The capacity of the underlying tendencies to occasion an occurrent defiled mental state means that there must be overlapping continuities at different levels of the mind. Our surface level sensory and cognitive states are conditioned by contact and by the latent dispositions. When sensory contact is of a suitable form, often the latent dispositions can become manifest. The potential for this transition from latent to manifest demands different levels of mental processing that overlap. Causal contact at a sensory receptor is not sufficient to explain sensory-cognitive consciousness, because the content of such states is affectively encoded by our latent motivations. Overlap occurs because sensory experience changes moment to moment but our motivations undergird that experience in the face of such change. This overlap seems sufficient for at least some kind of diachronic unity in the mind. Instead of the bhavaṅga citta filling a kind of stop-gap, it should be seen to arise in conjunction with other more
typical sensory and cognitive modes of consciousness, the former occasioned by latent defilements, the latter occasioned by occurrent sensory-cognitive objects and receptor stimulation. Clearly this view is not the canonical Abhidhamma view, but it makes more sense of the way that deep affective-motivational continuity impacts mere diachronic continuity in a Buddhist theory of mind. As we shall see in the following section, Ledi Sayadaw can be read as having a view very much like this.

7.4 Ledi Sayadaw’s Account of the Bhavaṅga Citta

Perhaps at this juncture it might seem unclear as to how Buddhist the position I have been articulating is. I think that it is quite Buddhist indeed and I am not alone in that conviction. Ledi Sayadaw was a scholar monk of great repute both for his achievements as a contemplative and as an Abhidhamma philosopher (Braun 2013). His numerous manuals (dipani) form an impressive corpus of philosophical engagement with the Tipiṭaka (Ledi 2001). In Bhikkhu Bodhi’s commentary on the Abhidhammattha Sangaha, the author points out numerous places where Ledi’s commentarial engagement diverged from more orthodox interpretations of a number of technical issues regarding how to properly characterize certain wholesome and unwholesome states (e.g. Abhi-s I, 6, Bodhi 1999, 38-9; see also Braun 2013). Additionally, in Burma, it was Ledi Sayadaw who first started to teach householders the contemplative technique of vipassanā which was arguably one of the most significant events in the advent of Buddhist modernism and the subsequent development of householder lineages of meditation that have become a mainstay of contemporary Buddhism (Braun 2013; McMahan 2008).

To my knowledge, in spite of his prowess as a free-thinking Abhidhamma scholar and contemplative, Ledi’s thought on the bhavaṅga citta has not been widely discussed. This is intriguing, as like many of his opinions on the Abhidhamma, his account of the bhavaṅga is highly heterodoxical and has had a palpable impact on how vipassanā is taught in the householder tradition that he founded. It is possible to read Ledi’s heterodoxical account of bhavaṅga in a phenomenologically and philosophically perspicuous way. In spite of some curious inconsistencies in his exegesis, I will show
that a certain reading of his account is able to deal with some of the difficulties I raised for the more canonical account in the previous section.

Ledi’s considered view on the bhavaṅga citta is contained in the Uttamapurisa Dipani or Manual of the Excellent Man. It is an extended response to a series of nine questions put forth by a lay-devotee named Maung Thaw. The second chapter contains an analysis of the five aggregates. It is here that Ledi explains his interpretation of the bhavaṅga citta. In the following passage Ledi lays out his account. After explaining why I think his is a good account, I will explore two subsequent confusions that make his exegesis as a whole more unstable. Here is the passage in full:

There is an ever-present process called 'the element of apprehension' (manodhātu) depending on the heart-base, which is so pure as to be lustrous. The mind-base is a functional state of subconsciousness (bhāvaṅga). When a visible object contacts the eye, the impact is simultaneously felt at the mind-base. So when one is looking at the moon, the image of the moon appears at both the eye-base and the mind-base simultaneously. When the viewer turns away from the moon, the image on the eye disappears instantly, but the image on the mind-base disappears rather slowly.

(Ledi UD, 49)

In this passage, we see that Ledi follows Buddhaghosa in identifying the luminous mind with the bhavaṅga citta. However, this is where his convergence with commentarial orthodoxy ends. There are two important divergences here that bear on issues discussed in the previous section. By providing an explanation of these divergences, I have two purposes in mind. The first is to show how philosophically interesting and tenable Ledi’s position actually is. Second, I want to finish providing reasons to endorse the last premise of the argument of this chapter. That premise comes in the form of a conditional which takes the conjunction of the three previous premises as its antecedent:

**AM₄.** If it is true that, the bhavaṅga citta is phenomenal as well as affectively and motivationally continuous, then phenomenal consciousness has a special connection to our orientation and disposition to act or respond to the world.
In order to earn the consequent of this conditional inference, I need to explain why the antecedent is a sufficient condition for the desired conclusion. By explicating the dual manner in which Ledi’s account differs from the Abhigrammic orthodoxy, I can begin to provide such an explanation.

The first divergence between Ledi’s account and the commentarial orthodoxy is the former’s claim of simultaneity. For Ledi, the bhavaṅga citta is constantly arising in response to occurrent sensory and cognitive input. It is not just a stop-gap that arises in their absence. The ‘subconscious’ mind is always feeling the impact of sensory-cognitive perturbations. This is the 'deeper current' of the stream of consciousness referred to previously (Waldron 2003). By positing a subliminal mind that is constantly reacting to sensory-cognitive input, we can start to make sense of how the latent affective-motivational continuity of the mind is always at work, in conjunction with the causal impact of intentional objects on sensory receptors, to realize our occurrent stream of experience. Our latent dispositions condition our expectations and intentions which in turn condition how and what we see when contact (phassa) occurs.

The second divergence is temporal. According to Ledi, the arising and passing away of the bhavaṅga citta happens at a more distended temporal interval than ordinary sensory-cognitive moments of consciousness. In the latter case, the presence of the object is necessary for the sensory state to persist. When the object that occasioned the citta disappears, that citta also subsides. However, in the case of the bhavaṅga citta it is a purely mental phenomenon (cf. Abhi-s III, 12). This means that this citta does not depend on the presence of external objects for its existence. For Ledi, this lack of dependence on the presence of a sensory object means that such a citta persists for a longer period of time than its episodic sensory-cognitive correlate. This is a helpful divergence from more canonical accounts which posit that all forms of citta arise and pass away in a momentary fashion with the same temporal interval. Such a divergence provides a basis for understanding how the impact of a previous experience can continue to condition a present one.

Consider the situation in which someone has verbally insulted you in the presence of your friends. The event has come and gone but the emotional impact of the insult continues to have an
impact on you. So severe was the verbal assault that for the remainder of the day you are in a bad mood and perceive your friends in a suspicious way; why didn’t they come to your defense? In addition to your continuing stream of thought and perception there is a reactionary process initiated by the insult that directs, motivates, and conditions your subsequent mental states. The continuation of the conscious experience is buoyed by both occurrent sensory and cognitive stimuli in addition to sankhāric reactions instigated by your previous public encounter with the person who insulted you. Edmund Husserl's example of hearing a melody is another helpful case (Husserl 2008; Thompson 2007). When you hear a melody, you do not hear a series of notes, one after the other. The coherence of the present moment depends on an immediately retained past and a forward-looking anticipation of the future. This is how a temporally extended experience of listening to music can make sense to us in the face of the fact that it is constantly changing.¹²⁸

The overlap between Ledi Sayadaw’s account of the bhavaṅga citta and the Yogācāra notion of ālaya-vijñāna is staggering. Indeed, on my reconstruction, Ledi looks more like a Yogācāra philosopher than he does a Théravādin exegete. The motivation for the Yogācāra to posit something like the ālaya-vijñāna arises out of the same scholastic milieu we examined in the last chapter. Indeed, the non-Therāvadin schools we examined there formed the historical basis for the development of the Yogācāra school. The need to solve the ‘Abhidharma problematic’ (Waldrom 2003) of how to explain kammic potentiality and the non-linear ways in which these potentials become manifest was felt in many of the Indian Buddhist philosophical schools. This was one of the primary motivations for the Yogācāra philosophers to innovate in such a radical way by adding new forms of conscious awareness to their conceptual schemas.

As William Waldron points out, “…the ālaya-vijñāna is portrayed as a kind of basal consciousness which persists uninterruptedly within the material sense-faculties during the

¹²⁸ It is important to note that in this context, Husserl’s explanatory target is somewhat different from ours. Husserl is here analysing the intentional structure of occurrent conscious experience, while we are talking about the diachronic unity of the mind. However, both points converge on the idea that our present experience of the world is deeply tied up with our capacity to retain and be influenced by the recent past.
absorption of cessation (niruddha-samāpatti)” (2003, 92). Ledi’s emphasis on the simultaneous functioning of the bhavaṅga citta at a more distended temporal interval than its sensory-cognitive correlates mirrors the Yogācāra emphasis on the contrast between ālaya-vijñāna and pravṛtti-vijñāna. This latter term denotes all forms of consciousness besides the ālaya-vijñāna which are united in being forms of ‘manifest cognitive awareness’ (Waldron 2003, 93). Both the bhavaṅga citta and the ālaya-vijñāna are not manifest because they do not depend on the causal contact of sensory objects with sensory receptors to arise. They operate in the background and are tacitly conditioned by this ordinary causal commerce with the world without being dependent on it for its origination. These forms of awareness are also not ‘cognitive’ in that they lack explicit intentional objects. Rather, both notions represent a kind of primal embodied sentience which is the condition for the arising of more ordinary forms of sensory-cognitive consciousness. Historically speaking, by putting this kind of emphasis on a minimal form of affectively perturbed sentient consciousness, these Buddhist philosophers were working with a model of the mind that anticipated the view I have been developing in conjunction with recent work in affective neuroscience, by several generations.

Philosophically speaking, by positing a layer of mental processing with an extended interval of arising and passing away, one that undergirds and is constantly reacting to ordinary sensory-cognitive states, Ledi’s account of the bhavaṅga citta allows the possibility for a coherent phenomenology of present experience, one that embraces the immediate past and future. From the point of view of the more canonical analysis of mental events in the Abhidhamma commentarial literature, Ledi’s account is highly heterodoxical because it rejects the notion of every mental state having the same short duration and that such events arise one at a time in a serial manner. In opposition to this view, we see the claim that the subliminal mind is constantly arising and passing away with a more distended temporal interval that allows it to retain and react to the content of ordinary sensory-cognitive moments of awareness. Thus, from a more canonical point of view, it is unclear how the deep motivational complexes that animate and drive the arising of consciousness can carry their kammic charge.
As we have seen, there is an important distinction between the latent and the manifest in kammic continuity, and this continuity is more than merely causal. Contained within the diachronic relations that connect each mental state are the prior dispositions, inclinations, preferences, and habits of the previous state. Conscious moments arise as a result of both these motivational impulses as well as current sensory-cognitive stimulation. If mental continuity is explained only in terms of one event arising in succession after another, these deeper levels of sankhāric reactivity that persist in latent forms becomes quite opaque. Since this is the case, from within the Buddhist philosophical framework I have been articulating, we are in a position to assert the conclusion of the argument:

**AM-C.** Phenomenal consciousness has a special connection to our orientation and disposition to act or respond to the world.

As I mentioned at the outset of the chapter, I will provide more empirically informed arguments in favor of this view in the final chapters.

Before concluding, I need to flag two confusions that arise in Ledi’s thinking about this topic. The first is a kind of slip that he makes back into a more canonical account of bhavaṅga citta. Shortly after the aforementioned passage, Ledi claims: "When consciousness arises, subconsciousness disappears...Just as darkness reasserts itself when a flash of lightning disappears, consciousness ceases and subconsciousness reasserts itself at the heart-base the moment the [image of the] moon gets out of the eye" (Ledi UD, 53). One way of reading this is to say that when Ledi claims that the mind element is a function of subconsciousness he is making a claim about an additional form of consciousness on top of the seven he is already working with (six sensory-cognitive consciousnesses and the bhavaṅga citta). Rather then referring to bhavaṅga citta specifically, he could be read as claiming that the mental element that is its function is another kind of consciousness. If that’s so, then Ledi’s view is even closer to Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy than it might already seem. On this reading, Ledi would seem to be working with eight kinds of consciousness rather than just seven. Either way,
Ledi’s view is importantly different from Buddhaghosa’s view on account of his positing a temporally extended mental kind that integrates the content of sensory-cognitive moments of consciousness.129

A second confusion is the following: "When a person is asleep,130 the mind is in a state of subconsciousness (bhāvanīga). This very subtle state of mind is always present in a living being, hovering around the heart-base like clear water oozing from a spring. It is an inert state of mind below the threshold of consciousness. So it cannot motivate the sense organs to function, either in bodily, verbal or mental action. It cannot advert to mental objects" (Ledi UD 51-2, emphasis mine). This passage is in blatant contradiction with the twofold interpretation of the Sutta material that I have been developing. The first part of this interpretation tries to show that we need a subliminal mental kind to account for latent kammic potentiality and that this mental kind has an impact on the arising of subsequent moments of consciousness. Ledi seems to reject both points.131

I have been arguing at length in favor of the first, namely that our capacity to purify our own minds by eradicating our unwholesome anusaya means that there must be more to the mind than a series of discrete events, one after the other and that such latent processes kammically condition consciousness. This point has been developed in contrast with the types of analysis typical of the Abhidhamma commentaries. However, regarding the second part of my interpretation, it is worth mentioning that Ledi seems to be rejecting a point contained in the canonical definition of the bhavaṅga citta, one with which I am inclined to agree. For example, in the Abhidhammattha

129 Additionally, the metaphor equating the bhavaṅga with darkness is inapt because of Buddhaghosa’s previous identification with the mind’s intrinsic luminosity.

130 I am assuming (charitably), that Ledi is here referring to dreamless sleep.

131 One might object that we should not take Ledi’s account too seriously in that it is obviously tailored to the needs of a householder and therefore his answers are probably not philosophically mature and have been neutered for the benefit of those who might end up reading it. I think this objection would be misplaced. It is true that Ledi had a special relationship with the lay community of Buddhist devotees. However, this relationship was one of rigorous tutelage. Not only did he introduce many householders to the depths of Buddhist contemplative practice, but he was also largely responsible for the lay study of the abhidhamma-pitaka. In the case of the Uttamapurisa Dipani, part of his stated reasons for such a thorough, book-length response was the precision and depth of the questions themselves. Thus, I think it safe to say that Ledi’s answers in this manual represent his considered views. Though, this of course does not speak to the inconsistencies I mentioned above (Braun 2013).
Sangaha, the adverting consciousness is directly tied to the bhavaṅga citta (Abhi-s III, 8). Indeed, according to this account, the arresting of the bhavaṅga citta is due to its disturbance by a sensory-cognitive object that causes the adverting citta to arise. Therefore, the bhavaṅga citta is not inert because it is sensitive to sensory-cognitive impingement, and its disturbance and arrest are the direct causal antecedent for the arising of the adverting citta.\(^{132}\)

**Conclusion**

I began with a fairly detailed outline of the functional role of the bhavaṅga citta in the Theravāda commentarial literature on the Abhidhamma. I then explored three related contexts in the Sutta s that seemed to indicate something like a bhavaṅga citta but with the additional conceptual baggage of recruiting the complex motivational psychology that undergirds the arising of consciousness. I tried to use this additional baggage to create a difficulty for Collins’s (1982) reading of bhavaṅga citta and to suggest that in addition to diachronic continuity and synchronic unity that the sankhāric complexes that operate at a subliminal level in the mind suggest that there is a limited form of diachronic unity to the mind that precludes the kind of momentariness indicated by the philosophically mature Abhidhamma philosophy.

I then turned to Ledi Sayadaw’s analysis of the bhavaṅga citta. In spite of some glaring inconsistencies in the text, I think that there is something tantalizing in Ledi’s brief account, one that shares much more with the ālaya-vijñāna of the Yogācāra school of Indian Buddhism than it does with canonical accounts of the bhavaṅga citta found in the Theravāda Abhidhamma commentarial literature (Lusthaus 2003, Waldron 2003). What this isomorphism between Ledi’s reading of bhavaṅga citta and the Yogācāra’s approach to ālaya-vijñāna suggests is that there is a reading of the Buddhist philosophical position that is highly consilient with the view that I have been developing in this dissertation. One that sees the most fundamental mode of conscious awareness as an embodied

\(^{132}\) The full significance of these inconsistencies cannot be developed here. However, it is curious that Ledi seems to diverge radically from the commentarial orthodoxy in one paragraph and then return to it in the next.
sentience that is constantly perturbed by reactions and affective biases. What the Buddhist view adds to the position I have been arguing for is a nuanced account of the different ways in which affect conditions experience at the deepest levels of mental processing, one that has a deep and long-standing influence on our habits of action, speech, and thought.

In the final chapter, I return to the question I took up at the end of part I of the dissertation as well as at the beginning of part II. Namely, I aim to complete the argument for affective action by thinking about the deep causal connections between affective subjectivity and habitual action patterns.
8
Feeling Our Way Through the Hard Problem

In this fathom-long body with its perceptions and thoughts there is the world, the origin of the world, the ending of the world and the path leading to the ending of the world.

Rohitasssa Sutta, AN II 47

Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to explain the final steps of the argument I outlined in chapter 5. Recall that the argument is the following:

**AA1.** The phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment.

**AA2.** If the phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment, then phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

**AA-C1.** Phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

**AA-C2.** Phenomenal character is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

In addition to completing my defense of this argument I will also provide some analysis of how the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character I have been developing might help us re-think the hard-problem of consciousness.

To begin, in §8.1, I consider some relevant empirical findings that will offer additional reasons for endorsing the second premise of the argument I began with at the outset of chapter 6 (AA2). I then turn my attention to a further positive statement of the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character (AEP) in §8.2, focusing on the way in which this view helps us harmonize some conceptual tensions in the varying ways that different affective science paradigms have tried to think about affective consciousness. Finally, in §8.3, I provide some explanation of how the picture I have been developing does and does not relate to the so-called ‘hard problem’ of consciousness. This will help me draw out the second conclusion of the argument above. Finally, I consider two important
objections to my view before offering some conclusions about how the chapters of part II collectively function as an argument for premise IV of the master argument.

8.1 Watermelons and the Instinctive Motor System

The purpose of this section is to provide further argument for (AA2) and to analyze the subsequent inferences and conclusions that I think follow from establishing this premise along with the argument’s first premise (AA1). Previously I approached arguing for these two premises by examining how the thought of William James can help us make progress on questions about the epistemic role of consciousness in contemporary discussions of perceptual attention (see chapter 5). Here, I return to some empirical findings from affective neuroscience that bear on this question of what role phenomenal character plays in helping us interact with our environment.

Recall that the second premise for the argument for affective access is the following:

**AA2.** If the phenomenal feeling of being affectively perturbed predisposes us to habitually act and react in certain ways to our environment, then phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

The thought here is simple; being affectively perturbed by our environment inculcates a kind of habit forming responsiveness that is distinct from our capacities for cognitive access. Call content that is habit forming in this way content that is affectively accessed. As we have seen, a subject S’s mental state M1 is access conscious if and only if M1’s content is poised for use in intentional action, speech, or thought. This formulation is ambiguous between M1’s content being accessible and being accessed. It might be the case that M1’s content is accessible but not accessed. In that case, the content of that state would not be actually taken up by S’s cognitive resources; such content would remain only potential fodder for such modes of cognitive output. By contrast, a mental state M2 is affectively accessed or accessible if M2’s content makes S react or respond in a fluid, habitual way according to the valence embedded in M2’s content. Thus, a subject’s capacity for affective access closely mirrors James’ notion of habitual action and what Panksepp (2000) calls the ‘Instinctual Motor System’. It is in virtue of having feelings in the body that we are able to integrate novel perceptual stimuli as relevant
to subsequent homeodynamic self-regulation and to contribute to the phylogenetically ancient store of behavioral responses that we learn to utilize in our ontogenetically specific enculturated experience.

In order to show more definitively that our having feelings of various sorts play a deeply causal role in our capacities for habit formation, we need to think about answering the following question: “If [adaptive] behavior is all that matters [for evolutionary flourishing], why are we all not just Cartesian beast machines, simply performing the behavior required to get our genes into the next generation without any accompanying pageant being played out in the phenomenal theater of the conscious mind?” (Dickinson and Balleine 2010, 74). Bracketing for the moment the unnecessary commitment to an internal theater of phenomenal goings on, the question still stands as an important one, the answer to which is embodied in the second premise I am going to argue for presently. Our capacity to feel with our bodies gives us behavioral skills we would not otherwise have by providing us with first-personal motivations to respond and react to the challenges of our environment.

To see that this is so, consider the following narrative and its accompanying experimental protocol from the above cited article (Dickinson and Balleine 2010). Anthony feels thirsty and finds a fruit stand and eats his first piece of watermelon. His thirst is quenched and a novel flavor is added to his gustatory repertoire. Later that same day, Anthony overindulges in red wine and becomes nauseated. The following day he feels thirsty again and decides to return to the fruit stand for more watermelon. Upon seeing the watermelon on the stand, instead of an increased anticipation for his soon-to-be-quenched thirst, he feels nauseated and decides not to eat the watermelon. Indeed, “…that was the last time that [Anthony] knowingly tasted watermelon — it was now disgusting” (ibid., 75). What happened here was that the subsequent nausea of Anthony’s drunkenness became mistakenly associated with the residual memory of the novel flavor of the watermelon, hence conditioning his subsequent perceptual evaluation of it as seeming disgusting. But if that is right, then how did Anthony simultaneously develop a tacit aversion to watermelon and an explicit rational desire to eat it when he became thirsty again the following day? My hypothesis is that Anthony was processing the content of his experience through two different forms of access. He was affectively accessing the content of his
experience of the watermelon in an aversive way and generating an intentional action to consume the watermelon by processing his desire for it through the functions of cognitive access.

It is Anthony’s capacity for affective experience that allowed these two non-overlapping forms of access to finally interact. That is,

...what fused these two psychologies, thereby allowing them to interact in the control of his subsequent behavior, was his phenomenal experience on the second exposure to the melon. It was the experience of nausea and disgust, in conjunction with a perceptual-cognitive representation of the melon as the object of this powerful negative affect, that led to the loss of his desire. If he had not experienced nor cared about the feeling of disgust phenomenally — and, indeed, there was something it was like to experience that nausea — [Anthony] would probably still seek out watermelon on hot summer days.

(Dickinson and Balleine 2010, 75)

To verify the results of this self-observation, the experimenters repeated the protocol with rats in a laboratory. A group of rats were denied water to the point of manifesting obvious thirst behaviors. They were then taught to press down a lever which delivered a sugar-water solution (instead of watermelon). Immediately following the sugar water exposure session, the rats were made ill; not from drinking too much wine, but from, “…injecting a mild toxin that induces gastric malaise” (ibid). When the rats were offered a second opportunity to quench their thirst with the previously available sugar water, the rats still pressed the lever in the hopes that the sugar water would be delivered. However, in the second condition no water was given so as to test the goal directed behavior of the rats before seeing whether the actual sought after reward would be subsequently rejected once it was received. As soon as the rats were given the sugar water, they responded with aversion to the taste of the sugar water. Subsequently, their lever pressing behavior ceased.

The authors dub their view the Hedonic Interface Theory (HIT). It states that:

...the function for [phenomenally] conscious hedonic and affective experience is to act as a motivational interface between the psychologies of the cognitive creature and the reflex machine. The function of this interface is to ground intentional desires, or
in other words, cognitive representations of goal values in the biological response of the reflex machine to motivationally relevant variables, such as nutritional and fluid depletion, poisoning, hormonal states, body temperature, and so on. This grounding occurs through the contiguous experience in phenomenal consciousness of the perception (or thought) of the target object or event (the melon) and the affect that it engenders (disgust) with the perception (or thought) it engenders… (ibid).

We have the capacity to experience latent feelings, what the Buddhists call *anusaya*. They guide behavior in a tacit way unless otherwise over ridden by the intentional actions of cognitive access to occurrent perceptual content. The role that our phenomenally conscious experience plays is to affectively motivate the formation of rational desires that are taken up by the architecture of cognitive access or to condition our capacities for affective access so that we can become habitually fluent at dealing with the affordance landscape of our environmental milieu.

Notice that the HIT account of the function of embodied affect does not explicitly distinguish between the various sorts of affect I was explaining in chapter 3. It is important to do so for the sake of understanding how bodily affect conditions our first-personal perspective. Because of this constant conditioning process, the phenomenal character of our experience is always affective in some way. Our capacity for sensory affect creates emotional responses that when felt deeply enough can disturb our homeodynamic equilibrium. Thus, for the rats, the sugar water has an initially pleasant sensory affect. Why? Because it sates their thirst, a homeodynamic affect. The feeling of being sated further motivates them to seek out the sugar water when next they become thirsty. This feeling of satiation and curious seeking feeling is an example of a core emotional affect. Thus, the relation between these three forms of affect is quite close, especially between core emotional and homeodynamic affect. Therefore, in the next section, I will clarify the relation between these two kinds of affects.

### 8.2 Core Bodily Affect and the Subjective Character of Experience

Core affective reactivity is the most basic way in which we are related first personally to our environment. We are in the first case biological subjects who are continually affectively perturbed by the world in which we live (Critchley and Harrison 2013). We are constantly self-regulating in response
to these perturbances and in so doing we live through an embodied first person perspective that is affectively felt and makes the world seem a certain way to us by being affectively salient (Park and Tallon-Baudry 2014). However, there is still some ambiguity and disagreement about what kinds of affects need to be prioritized in our analysis of the affective basis of our subjective character. In chapter 3, I enumerated three forms of bodily affect, sensory, emotional, and homeodynamic. I also subdivided emotional affects into core emotional affects, emotions, and moods. There are some important disagreements that arise between theoretically oriented neuroscientists about the nature of core emotional affect and homeodynamic affect. Getting clear about these details will help us deepen our understanding of the affective nature of the embodied subjective character of experience.

First, there is a disagreement among theoretically minded affective neuroscientists regarding which kinds of affective events constitute the most phylogenetically and physiologically basic form of consciousness. Jaak Panksepp thinks that core emotional affects are the most basic and that sensory affects and homeodynamic affects, "...may not be essential for the foundations of consciousness itself" (Panksepp and Biven 2012; 90). By contrast, those neuroscientists more focused on homeodynamic interoception think that this process is the root of experience (Denton 2006, Denton et al. 2009, Craig 2003a, 2010).

The second point of disagreement is about how to characterize the most basic type of feeling such that its origination in evolution might confer adaptive advantage to organisms. For Panksepp, the SEEKING system is the most basic and pervasive core emotional affect. It is an "energizing hedonically positive functional system of the brain..." (Panksepp 2005; 46). Consider, once again, the example of thirst. When the salt concentration of the bloodstream becomes too high, there is a parched feeling in the throat. This affect functions as a negative feedback signal about the state of the bloodstream. In response, the SEEKING system comes online and one begins to explore one’s environment in a probing and expectant way in search of satiation. The activation of the SEEKING system is a kind of forward looking response to the thirst. By contrast, the interoceptive theory of feeling claims that the most basic sense of feeling that organisms possess is one of danger (Denton et al. 2009; 501). The interruption of homeodynamic balance is felt interoceptively as thirst or hunger.
Such feelings are experienced as a specific sort of lack and need by the organism. This felt lack then motivates a search for the necessary resources. This subsequent action will be carried out by a core emotional affect system like SEEKING. Once the necessary resources are acquired and ingested, the organism will return to equilibrium.

Panksepp seems to think that phenomenally conscious experience arises once action scripts and their associated core emotional affects have become stable enough through evolution to orient the organism in paradigmatic ways towards the world. Further, this affect has a positive hedonic valence that motivates the organism to seek out possibilities in its environment. By contrast, most interoceptive theorists (Denton 2006, Denton et al. 2009, Craig 2010) posit that embodied affect becomes experiential at a more primitive level as a signal to the organism that something is amiss and must be corrected for immediately.

This disagreement raises the question of what level of physiological complexity homeodynamic life-regulation becomes subjectively experienced as bodily affect. This question is difficult to address because homeodynamic processes go on at the cellular level. For example, a cell’s capacity for excitation is a basic form of homeodynamic self-regulation and, according to some theorists, the first real instance of sentience (Cook et al. 2014; 698). Should the cell’s differential capacity to withstand positive ion flow across its plasma membrane be considered affective? If we want to characterize the cell’s activity as affective, then we need either to affirm that any homeodynamic system, however basic, possesses some degree of consciousness, or we need to draw some principled line whereby organisms on one side are conscious and all others are not. It seems reasonable to assume that the cell is not conscious in the sense that it does not have intentional access to its own states. However, it is possible that in a more basic sense of living sentience, that even these more basic forms of life are phenomenally conscious in a minimal sense (Thompson 2007; 2015).

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Giovanna Colombetti (2014) speaks in this way when she talks of ‘primordial affect’ which for her is not phenomenally conscious.
The third disagreement is about the nature of pain. This disagreement will orient us towards a synthesis of these two views regarding which sort of affect realizes our most basic form of experience. In Panksepp's account, pain is part of the exteroceptive system (Panksepp and Biven op. cit.), which is a widespread view among scientists and philosophers. On this view, pain is what happens when something from without impacts you in an aversive way. Pain signals that there is something amiss somewhere due to contact with the world outside. It is a kind of 'affective gloss' on sensory information (Aydede 2014). More precisely, "In this conventional view, pain is represented centrally by convergent somatosensory activity conveyed by wide-dynamic-range cells in the deep dorsal horn of the spinal cord to a modifiable pattern detector in the somatosensory thalamus and cortices" (Craig 2003a; 303). However, as I noted in §3.2.1 of the third chapter, Bud Craig's (2002) research on pain seems to suggest that pain is better conceived of as a homeodynamic affect (cf Klein 2015). Pain is a local disturbance of the felt equilibrium that the organism experiences when things within its bodily milieu are being regulated within a range of activation that is neither deficient nor in excess of the organism's needs at that time.

We can now make the connection to core emotional affects. If I may be pardoned a somewhat crude computational analogy, core emotional affects are like pattern recognition software that gets set up through the long course of evolutionary development. As organisms adapt to their environments they establish patterns of living that create various kinds of primal expectancy: when homeodynamic perturbation of type x arises, with intensity level y, action z is most appropriate. Core emotional affects play the role of encoding those 'paradigm scenarios' in a way that allows the organism to remember and subsequently implement previously successful responses. Core emotional affects are ancient evolutionary memories. The oscillation between the affective baseline of homeodynamic equilibrium and disturbances of various kinds is the biological pendulum out of which core emotional affects are

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134 This term was coined by Ronnie De Sousa (1990) to explain how we might conceive of the rational informativeness of emotions without relying on reified basic emotions. Thus, I am taking the term somewhat out of context. Nevertheless, I think this is an informative use. Paradigm scenarios are specified in terms of typical objects of experience and accompanying responses. Pankesepp's core emotional affects are primitive feeling-action programs that encode biologically relevant paradigm scenarios.
constructed. Core emotional affects are genetically constrained affect patterns that emerge out of homeodynamic disturbances that reach an affective pitch sufficient to warrant a feeling-action script that pre-empts subsequent arousal to that level. Thus, core emotional affects play a positive role in helping the organism to deal with paradigm scenarios in the environment.

Homeodynamic affects like thirst and the need for air are more basic than core emotional affects such as SEEKING or FEAR. However, it may be the case that embodied affective experience can only occur when homeodynamic feedback becomes stable enough such that the feeling-action patterns of core emotional affects can occur. My hypothesis here is that the first arising of consciousness is homeodynamic in nature but that the phylogenetic and ontogenetic requirement is that homeodynamic patterns of arousal are stable enough to provide survival based imperatives for activating core emotional affects. These imperatives orient the organism in paradigmatic ways towards its environment, thus providing evidence for the view that in virtue of our capacity to feel, we are related affectively to our environment.

We are now in a position to derive the first conclusion of the argument. By showing that our being affectively perturbed orients and habituates us towards environmental responsiveness and that our capacity to feel what is going on in our bodies phenomenally plays a role in this orienting, it follows that our capacity for phenomenal affect plays a role in organizing our habitual actions. Just as the content of our phenomenally conscious experiences can cross the boundary of perception into cognition so as to provide justificatory warrant for certain kinds of thoughts, so also does our having bodily affect organize our habitual bodily responses to the environment at the boundary between perception and action. Thus, the conclusion follows:

**AA-C1.** Phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

In the next section I will apply this picture to the so-called hard-problem of consciousness. In doing so I will show how my view can make the hard problem far less difficult. This discussion will also show how we can derive the second conclusion of this argument also.
8.3 Making the Hard Problem Less Hard

At the beginning of chapter 1, I noted that philosophers often distinguish between two kinds of problems of consciousness; namely, easy and hard problems (Chalmers 1996). The easy problem is often thought of as a plurality of problems. They concern the question of how to explain the ways in which information processing of different types in the human nervous system facilitate the representation of properties of the environment and how these relate to outputs of various kinds at the level of bodily action, speech, and thought (Block 1995). By contrast, the hard problem of consciousness is concerned with why it is the case that any experience or phenomenally conscious state would accompany such information processing. Why is it that there is anything it is like to be a creature in the world beholding its environment (Nagel 1974)? This question does not have a ready answer. I must confess that I do not have a definitive answer to this question. I do however think that the view I have been developing here can contribute to making the hard problem seem less hard. Or at least it can make phenomenal consciousness seem less weird or mysterious.

Philosophers who are compelled by the hard problem often remark that phenomenal consciousness is utterly mysterious, that we, as yet, have no understanding of why there might be phenomenal consciousness (Kriegel 2009). Even in the absence of a full explanation of phenomenal consciousness, I think this kind of principled befuddlement is a bit dramatic. If the view I have been developing has any merit, it is to provide us with some reason for thinking that it makes good evolutionary sense for organisms to have developed an affective point of view on their environment.

Part of the reason for the dramatic pose that comes with taking the hard problem so seriously comes from a tacit or sometimes explicit commitment to what in the first chapter I called the ‘nomological dangler’ view of consciousness. Such a view conceives of consciousness as one particularly weird property among many other less weird properties. In the absence of any explanation of this property, philosophers then choose their favored metaphysical strategy to deal with the epistemic problem. Some opt to eliminate discussion of these properties altogether (Dennett 1991; Ryle 2000). Some try to claim that these properties are identical — either at the level of type or token — with brain states (Smart 1959; Block 1995; 2003). Others opt for non-reductive metaphysical
pictures whereby these properties become fundamental constituents of reality, pictures which lead to
dualism, panpsychism, or some kind of neutral monism (Chalmers 2002). I have done my best to avoid
getting entangled in metaphysical debates of this kind. However, at this juncture I cannot avoid saying
something about this problem, even if I will decline to take a strong position on what kind of
metaphysics we ought to endorse in trying to deal with it.

As I have argued in the preceding chapters, I think the nomological dangler view of
consciousness is wrong. A proper understanding of the nature of phenomenal consciousness must deal
with the fact that it is organized through the embodied perspective of an organism that is intentionally
oriented towards its environment. When this point is taken on board, it becomes clear that
phenomenal properties are not just properties laid out on a metaphysical map next to other non-
phenomenal properties from which we can conceptually analyze their natures from nowhere (Hellie
2013). The nature of phenomenal character is that it is always known from a first-personal point of
view that is constructed by the evolved perceptual apparatus of the organism that lives through it. It is
in virtue of living through this first-personal perspective that the world shows up at all. Thus, on this
view, phenomenal consciousness isn’t hard to explain because it dangles off the edge of the world, but
because it is that in virtue of which the world is knowable. The phenomenal character of experience
permeates our access to the world in manifold ways. Stepping outside of consciousness to explain it
non-consciously isn’t just hard, it’s impossible.

The most notorious example of this kind of thinking is the zombie argument. The zombie
argument goes like this: a zombie completely lacks phenomenal consciousness while nonetheless being
a physical, functional, and behavioral duplicate of a conscious human being. Such a zombie is
conceivable, that is, the concept of a zombie implies no contradiction or conceptual incoherence. If a
zombie is conceivable, then it is metaphysically possible for a zombie to exist. If that’s right, then
physicalism has to be false because for physicalism to be true, there would need to be some conceptual
entailment relation between physical and functional concepts and phenomenal concepts. But if it’s
metaphysically possible for there to be a zombie, then no such entailment is forthcoming. Therefore,
physicalism is false.
Philosophers have responded in different ways to this problem. Most of those who reject the argument do so in an attempt to defend physicalism. One way this goes is by denying the conceivability of a zombie. I agree that zombies are inconceivable, but in denying this I do not wish to endorse physicalism. My reasons for rejecting this premise should be obvious. As Evan Thompson explains, “…many perceptual and motor abilities of one’s physical living body evidently depend on that body’s being a subjectively lived body...The zombie scenario requires the assumption that bodily experience is not necessary for or in any ways constitutive of the relevant behavior; that exactly the same behavior is possible without bodily sentience” (2007, 231). As I have argued at length, our capacity to feel what is happening in our bodies provides us with a host of environmental coping skills that we would otherwise lack. However, in rejecting the zombie as a useful conceptual tool for consciousness theorizing, I am not committed to the reduction of phenomenal consciousness to the behaviors that it enables. Rather, consciousness is that medium through which knowledge and action are possible and meaningful.

A physicalist might take this argument as evidence for their conclusion. That is, if it is the case that phenomenal consciousness, in the form of embodied sentience and feeling, is causally necessary for behavior, then it might be thought to entail the conclusion that consciousness is physically constituted. This entailment is generated by the plausible claim that all behavior is determined by purely physical causes. In response to this view I would say that since we have no conceptual entailment between physical and functional concepts on the one hand, to phenomenal concepts on the other, that it is not clear that we must conclude that consciousness is physically constituted. After all, the lack of conceptual entailment shows that we have no idea what the constitution might mean. This was the point of Nagel’s (1974) argument that we looked at in the first chapter. Rather, what we can safely conclude is that any conception of the physical that does not include the phenomenal perspective of the organism apprehending the physical will be incomplete. The inclusion of a phenomenal perspective in a causal story about behavior does not entail that this perspective can be explained or is fully constituted by physical goings on. Rather, it entails that any explanation of an organism’s
behavior will be incomplete if it does not advert to the embodied phenomenal sentience of that organism’s first-personal perspective on the world.

Thus, I do not take myself to have solved the hard problem, but only to make the existence of phenomenal consciousness seem less strange. It makes good evolutionary sense for creatures to be phenomenally conscious. By living through a first-person affective point of view, organisms are able to flourish in ways they might not have been capable of otherwise. Feeling things in and with the body helps us to develop useful habits of environmental response. With this in mind, we can now make the step to the final conclusion of the argument of this chapter. The first conclusion of this argument was that:

**AA-C1.** Phenomenal affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

However, since I have established that all experience is affective in some way, then it follows that:

**AA-C2.** Phenomenal character is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

With this view in place, we have an account of what phenomenal consciousness does for us, what it is for. Further, my account does not commit me to an anthropocentric analysis of the perception-cognition interface. I can explain the function of phenomenal character in a way that is more phylogenetically generous because my account does not require that creatures who enjoy phenomenal consciousness be capable of thinking thoughts in order for their experiences to provide them with the adaptive advantage they would not otherwise have.

### 8.4 Objections

Before concluding, I consider two important objections. In essence, these objections press a singular point, namely that it is possible to provide a non-phenomenal functional reduction of affect and that with this it might be possible to negate the role of experience in furnishing us with evolved capacities for environmental responsiveness.
8.4.1 On the Dissociation of Feeling and Function

Joseph Ledoux contends that the phenomenal character of all affective experience is modulated by our cortically grounded capacity for metacognition (Ledoux and Brown 2017) and that there is a strict dissociation from anything that is phenomenally felt and what he calls ‘survival circuits’ in the brain and body that help facilitate evolved coping with an organism’s environment (Ledoux 2012). If Ledoux is right, then his view would amount to a falsification of (AA2) on the grounds that there is no need to advert to felt affect in explaining our survival circuits and their associated behaviors. Some kind of non-phenomenal affect — whatever that ends up meaning — does the job just fine.

Ledoux's arguments for this view are not convincing. He contends that conscious feelings of fear and anxiety are poorly correlated with behavior and physiological responses controlled by what he calls ‘defensive survival circuits’ (Ledoux and Brown 2017, 2). He uses fear and anxiety as a proxy for all emotional affects on the grounds that fear is phylogenetically basic enough to serve as a generalizable but specific example of how affects come apart from the instinctual motor system. Even granting this premise, Ledoux's argument fails. This is because he grounds his analysis of these circuits in amygdala activation. He reasons that we can have feelings of fear and anxiety that come apart from amygdala activation and that in backwards masking scenarios where a fearful stimulus is suppressed from awareness, the amygdala circuit for fear is active but there is no verbal report of feeling fear.

This argument doesn’t work. The idea that the amygdala is the ‘fear network’ is overly simplistic (Pessoa 2013). The amygdala is one of the most densely interconnected sites in the entire brain and is implicated in networks of activation that subserve a whole host of mental processes. A better characterization of the general function of the amygdala would be as a kind of salience centre that functions to render certain relevant stimuli present to the subject. That the amygdala wasn’t noticeably active during a verbal report of fear and anxiety doesn’t tell us anything about the functional dissociation of our feelings of fear and the instinctual motor systems that might be operational at that time. This is especially the case when we consider that our capacities for cognitive access are capable of over-riding our instinctive responses, especially if other information might be relevant (Dickinson and Balleine 2010). For example, feeling startled in an experimental setting where there is no real
threat to life could have a palpable effect on one’s aversive reactions being fully manifested at the level of one’s motor intentionality. That these things might come apart in such cases is not an argument in favor of their irrelevance to each other, but only that our capacities for higher-order self-regulation allow us to intervene on otherwise entrenched response habits.

8.4.2 Is this Functional Reduction?

Another strategy worth thinking about is the explicit functional reduction of phenomenal affect. Rudrauf and Damasio (2005) take this route. In order to provide a dynamical, though purely functional analysis of felt affect, these authors use concepts like grappling, inertia, variance, perturbations, divergence, over-excitation or overflow, resistance, and tension to describe a relationship between an organism and its environment (239-40). Their hypothesis is the following: “To be a ‘feeling subject’ consists in a behavior of monitoring and control characterized by a process of resistance to variance through which an embodied neurocognitive system grapples with the inertia of the functional perturbations that its brain and body-proper continuously and inevitably undergo during the process of cognition and emotion” (241). To borrow a phrase from John McDowell (1994) in describing the work of Gareth Evans (1982), this account is smoothly naturalistic. Its success will depend on the extent to which each of the concepts they make use of can do the explanatory work without becoming tacitly phenomenal in its own right.

Consider notions like tension and resistance or grappling and perturbations. One might be tempted to think that these notions can only do explanatory work in explaining the relation of an embodied feeling subject to its environment by making use of the fact that to grapple with the world in the face of being perturbed by it is to feel a certain way. What else might tension be but the felt tightness of the internal milieu as it viscerally resists the changing shape of the constant siege of sensory bombardment? To be clear, I do not wish to offer a decisive argument one way or the other. I think there may be a viable strategy for functional reduction here. By grounding phenomenal character in the embodied perspective of the organism and its capacity for affect, if we are able to functionalize bodily affect, then we can plausibly functionalize phenomenal character.
I have my doubts that this is the case. As I have tried to argue, as far as I can tell, there is an irreducible role for felt experience to play in our mental life. When we try to explain that experience in terms of non-experiential notions, then we lose something. Nevertheless, the possibility of a functional account, whether veridical or not, points towards the more general point I have been at pains to make in this chapter, namely that by thinking about consciousness in terms of a feeling embodied subject, we make the explanandum less mysterious, and the hard problem less hard.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have completed an argument I began in chapter 6 that phenomenal bodily affect has a role to play in helping us learn how to respond to our environment. In concluding, it’s important to situate that argument within the general argument I have been developing over the duration of this work. Recall from the Introduction that I set out my master argument:

I. Subjectivity is constitutive of phenomenal character.

II. The embodied perspective of the organism is constitutive of subjective character.

III. Affect is constitutive of an organism’s embodied perspective.

C1. Affect is constitutive of phenomenal character.

IV. Affect is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

C2. Phenomenal character is inseparably causally coupled with habitual action.

I argued for (I) and (II) in the first and second chapters by focusing on a reconstruction of Nagel’s (1974) view that emphasized the perspective of the organism. The argument for (III) came in chapter 3, which then allowed me to derive the first conclusion of the master argument. In chapter 4, I provided an analysis of the first explanatory boon of the affectively embodied perspectival view of subjective character (AEP). Namely, that this view can help us make headway on the phenomenal overflow controversy. It was here that I introduced the notion of affective access and distinguished it from cognitive access. In the second part of the dissertation, starting with chapter 5, I developed my view of affective access by utilizing the conceptual resources of William James’s and the Indian Buddhists’s systems. I argued that my view can also help furnish consciousness with an explanatory role in a theory
about the nature of the mind. Specifically, consciousness plays an epistemic role in providing the organism with a certain kind of practical knowledge about how to respond to the affective primes of its environment. I developed these thoughts into an argument for affective access to substantiate (IV) in order to earn the second conclusion (C2).

We feel more than we explicitly know. In living through these feelings, we are oriented towards a meaningful world that shows itself to us in the way it does because of how our attention is deployed in implicit and explicit response to the motivations that our feelings deliver to us. Those motivations are both phylogenetically ancient and ontogenetically specific. The individuality of our affective lives is born in the mixing and blending of our concrete individual experiences with our evolutionarily primed dispositions. By feeling through our bodies, we are both individuals in the world, and a drop in an ocean of feelings that unite us with each other and many other creatures further down the phylogenetic scale. Because the ocean of feelings is so deep, it is often more convenient to ignore what is happening inside the body and to focus on the world outside. Philosophers have been doing this for a while now and it has had an impact on our capacity to deal with the deeply affective nature of our phenomenal subjectivity. The deepest core of our conscious lives is the one that unfolds within the framework of this fathom long body. It is a nexus of affect that renders our commerce with the world meaningful, and that is something worth knowing well.
Appendix:
Translations from the Tipitaka Regarding Anusaya

What follows are a series of translations pertaining to the concept of *anusaya*. These translations come from across different parts of the Pāli Tipiṭaka and Buddhaghosa’s commentaries. I cite from these in the body of the dissertation but collect them all here in one place for ease of reference.

**Sattakanipātapāḷi, paṭhamapaṇṇasakaṃ, 2. anusayavaggo, 1. paṭhamānusayasuttaṃ**
(AN 7.11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāli</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. “sattime, bhikkhave, anusayā. katame satta? kāmarāgānusayo, paṭighānusayo, diṭṭhānusayo, vicikicchānusayo, mānānusayo, bhavarāgānusayo, avijjānusayo. ime kho, bhikkhave, satta anusayā”ti. paṭhamamaṃ.</td>
<td>There are seven underlying tendencies. What are the seven? The underlying tendency to sensual lust, the underlying tendency to aversion, the underlying tendency to views, the underlying tendency to doubt, the underlying tendency to conceit, the underlying tendency to lust for becoming, the underlying tendency to ignorance. Inded these, bhikkhus, are the seven underlying tendencies.</td>
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**Sattakanipātapāḷi, paṭhamapaṇṇasakaṃ, 2. anusayavaggo, 2. dutiyānusayasuttaṃ**
(AN 7.12)

<table>
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<th>Pāli</th>
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<tr>
<td>12. “sattannaṃ, bhikkhave, anusayānaṃ pahānāya samucchedāya brahmacariyaṃ vussati. katamesaṃ sattannaṃ? kāmarāgānusayassa pahānāya samucchedāya brahmacariyaṃ vussati, paṭighānusayassa ... pe ... diṭṭhānusayassa ... vicikicchānusayassa ... mānānusayassa ... bhavarāgānusayassa ... avijjānusayassa pahānāya samucchedāya brahmacariyaṃ vussati. imesaṃ kho,</td>
<td>Bhikkhus, the holy life is lived for the abandonment, the cutting off of the seven underlying tendencies. What are the seven? The holy life is lived for the abandonment, the cutting off of the underlying tendency to sensual lust...to aversion...to views...to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bhikkhave, sattanaṃ anusayānaṃ pahānāya samucchedāya brahmacarīyaṃ vussati.

“yato ca kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno kāmarāgānusayo pahīno hoti uccinamūlo tālāvatthukato anabhāvaṃkato āyatīṃ anuppādadhammo. paṭighānusayo... pe ... diṭṭhānusayo... vicīcchānusayo... mānānusayo... bhavarāgānusayo... avijjānusayo pahīno hoti uccinamūlo tālāvatthukato anabhāvaṃkato āyatīṃ anuppādadhammo. ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, bhikkhu acceṣchi tanhaṃ, vivattayi saṃyojanam, saṃmā mānābhisamayā antamakāsi dukkhassā”ti. dutiyaṃ.

Indeed, Bhikkhus, because a bhikkhu has eliminated the underlying tendency to sensual lust, cut it off at the foundation, uprooted it like a palm tree, [accomplished] its utter cessation so that there is no more future arising; ...because a bhikkhu has eliminated the underlying tendency to aversion...to views...to doubt...to conceit...to lust for existence...to ignorance, cut it off at the foundation, uprooted it like a palm tree, [accomplished] its utter cessation so that there is no more future arising, this person is said Bhikkhus to be a bhikkhu who has cut off craving, stripped away the fetters, properly penetrated conceit, has made an end of dukkha.

Mūlapaṇṇāsapāli, 5. cūlayamakavago. 4. cūḷavedallasuttaṃ (MN 44, I, 299)

What follows is a translation of a few key sections from this important Sutta from MN:

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<tr>
<td>460. evaṃ me sutam — ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā rājagahe viharati veļuvane kalandakanivāpe. atha kho visākho upāsako yena dhammadinnā bhikkhuni tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā dhammadinnāṃ bhikkhuniṃ abhipādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinno kho visākho upāsako dhammadinnāṃ bhikkhuniṃ</td>
<td>Thus have I heard. At one time, the Blessed One was abiding at Rajagah in the Bamboo Grove, in a place where the squirrels were fed. Then the lay follower Visakha went to where the bhikkhuni Dhammadinna was and approached her. Having drawn near to the bhikkhuni</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Dhammadinna and having bowed down, he sat down to one side. Indeed, sitting to one side, the lay follower Visakha spoke thus to the bhikkhuni Dhammadinna:

“Master, ‘Personality, personality’ is said. Indeed, Master, what is called ‘personality’ by the Blessed One?”

“Indeed, friend Visakha, these five aggregates of clinging are said to be personality by the Blessed One as follows: the form aggregate of clinging, the feeling aggregate of clinging the cognition aggregate of clinging, the formations aggregate of clinging, the consciousness aggregate of clinging. Indeed, friend Visakha, these five aggregates of clinging are said to be personality by the Blessed One.”

Saying, “Well said, Master”, indeed the lay follower Visakha having rejoiced and appreciated what was said by the bhikkhuni Dhammadinna, he asked the bhikkhuni a further question: “Master, ‘the arising of personality, the arising of personality’ is said. Indeed, Master, what was called ‘the arising of personality’ by the Blessed One?”

“Friend Visakha, [it is] craving which leads to rebirth, is endowed with enjoyment and lust, delighting in this and that as follows – craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming; indeed, friend Visakha, this is called the arising of personality by the Blessed One.”
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>465. “kati panāyye, vedanā”ti?</th>
<th>“Moreover, Master, how many [kinds of] feeling are there?”</th>
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<tr>
<td>“tisso kho imā, āvuso visākha, vedanā — sukhā vedanā, dukkhā vedanā, adukkhamasukhā vedanā”ti.</td>
<td>“Friend Visakha, there are indeed three [kinds of] feeling – pleasant feeling, painful feeling and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“katamā panāyye, sukhā vedanā, katamā dukkhā vedanā, katamā adukkhamasukhā vedanā”ti?</td>
<td>“And what, Master, is pleasant feeling, what is painful feeling, what is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“yaṃ kho, āvuso visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā sukham sātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ sukhā vedanā. yaṃ kho, āvuso visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā dukkham asātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ dukkhā vedanā. yaṃ kho, āvuso visākha, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā neva sātaṃ nāsātaṃ vedayitaṃ — ayaṃ adukkhamasukhā vedanā”ti.</td>
<td>“Friend Visakha, indeed whatever feeling either bodily or mental is pleasant and comfortable – this is pleasant feeling. Friend Visakha, indeed whatever feeling either bodily or mental is painful and disagreeable – this is painful feeling. Friend Visakha, indeed whatever is felt either to the body or to the mind as neither comfortable or uncomfortable – this is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“sukhā panāyye, vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā, dukkhā vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā, adukkhamasukhā vedanā kiṃsukhā kiṃdukkhā”ti?</td>
<td>“And Master, what is pleasant, what is painful with respect to pleasant feeling, what is pleasant, what is painful with regard to painful feeling, what is pleasant, what is painful with regard to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sukhā kho, āvuso visākha, vedanā thitisukhā vipariṇāmadukkhā; dukkhā vedanā thitidukkhā vipariṇāmasukhā; adukkhamasukhā vedanā nāṇasukhā aṇṇāṇadukkhā”ti.</td>
<td>“Friend Visakha, indeed pleasant feeling is pleasant when it is stable, painful when it changes, painful feeling is painful when it is stable, pleasant when it changes, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is pleasant when there is insight, painful when there is ignorance.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“sukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti, dukkhāya vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya kiṃ anusayo anuseti”ti?

“sukhāya kho, āvuso visākha, vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”ti.

“sabbāya nu kho, ayye, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”ti?

“na kho, āvuso visākha, sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anuseti, na sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayo anuseti, na sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo anuseti”ti.

“sukhāya panāyye, vedanāya kiṃ pahātabbañ, dukkhāya vedanāya kiṃ pahātabbañ, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya kiṃ pahātabban”ti?

“And Master, what is the underlying tendency that underlies pleasant feeling, what is the underlying tendency that underlies painful feeling, what is the underlying tendency that underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?

“Friend Visakha, indeed the underlying tendency to lust underlies pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion underlies painful feeling, the underlying tendency to ignorance underlies neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

“And indeed Master, does the underlying tendency to lust underly all pleasant feeling, does the underlying tendency to aversion underly all painful feeling, does the underlying tendency to ignorance underlie all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?

“Indeed, Friend Visakha, the underlying tendency to lust does not underlie all pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie all painful feeling, the underlying tendency to ignorance does not underlie all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

“And Master, what is to be abandoned regarding pleasant feeling, what is to be abandoned regarding painful feeling, what is to be abandoned regarding neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”
“sukhāya kho, āvuso visākha, vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, dukkhāya vedanāya patighānusayo pahātabbo, adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo”ti.

“sabbāya nu kho, ayye, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya patighānusayo pahātabbo, sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo”ti?

“na kho, āvuso visākha, sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo, na sabbāya dukkhāya vedanāya patighānusayo pahātabbo, na sabbāya adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayo pahātabbo. idhāvuso visākha, bhikkhu vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajāṃ pītisukhaṃ pathamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. rāgam tena pajahati, na tattha rāgānusayo anuseti. idhāvuso visākha, bhikkhu iti paṭisaṅcikkhati — ‘kudāssu nāmāham tadāyatanam upasampajja viharissāmi yadariyā etarāhi āyatanam upasampajja viharanti’ti? iti anuttaresu vimokkhesu pihām upaṭṭhāpayato uppajjati pihāppaccayā domanassam. patighaṃ tena pajahati, na tattha patighānusayo anuseti. idhāvuso visākha, bhikkhu sukhassa ca pahānā, dukkhassa ca pahānā, pubbeva

“Friend Visakha, indeed, the underlying tendency to lust is to be abandoned regarding pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion is to be abandoned regarding painful feeling, the underlying tendency to ignorance is to be abandoned regarding neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.”

“And indeed Master, is the underlying tendency to lust to be abandoned regarding all pleasant feelings, is the underlying tendency to aversion to be abandoned regarding all painful feeling, is the underlying tendency to ignorance to be abandoned regarding all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling?”

“Friend Visakha, indeed, the underlying tendency to lust is not to be abandoned regarding all pleasant feeling, the underlying tendency to aversion is not to be abandoned regarding all painful feeling, the underlying tendency to ignorance is not to be abandoned regarding all neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. Here, friend Visakha, a bhikkhu having entered the first jhāna accompanied by application and investigation aloof from sensual pleasures, aloof from unwholesome dhammas joyful and happily abides. Because of this, [the bhikkhu] abandons lust, the underlying tendency to lust does not lie dormant there. Here, Friend Visakha, a bhikkhu considers thus: ‘When will I enter and abide in that sphere entered into and abidied in by those noble ones? For one who arouses desire for
unsurpassed liberation mental pain [also] arises with [that] desire as its condition. Because of this, they abandon aversion, the underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie that [state]. Here Friend Visakha, a bhikkhu abandoning pleasure and abandoning pain and previously setting down joy and grief having entered the fourth jhāna abides with neither pain nor pleasure, with mindfulness purified by equanimity. Because he abandons ignorance, the underlying tendency to ignorance does not lie dormant there.

Selections from Cūḷavedallasuttavaṇṇanā & ūkā in Papañcasūdanaṁ

In this and other commentaries, the Pāli terms in bold followed by ti represents phrases from the original Sutta that are being quoted by Buddhaghosa.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pāli</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kim anusayo anusetīti katamo anusayo anusetī. appahīnaṭṭhena sayito viyā hotīti anusayapucchaṁ pucchatī.</td>
<td>“Which underlying tendency underlies...[pleasant, painful, and neither pleasure nor painful feeling]?” = He asks the question about underlying tendencies: ‘with the meaning of non-abandonment, it is like a sleeping.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na kho, āvuso visākha, sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anusetīti na sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo anusetī. na sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya so appahīno, na sabbāṁ sukhāṁ vedanaṁ ārabbha uppajjatīti attho. esa nayo sabbattha.</td>
<td>“No indeed, friend Vishaka, the underlying tendency to sensual lust does not underly all pleasant feeling” = It is not the case that the lantent disposition to lust underlies all pleasant feeling. Meaning, [that tendency] of all pleasant feeling is not unabandoned, [the underlying tendency] does</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**kim pahātabbanti ayaṃ pahānapucchā nāma.**

**rāgam tena pajahatīti ettha ekeneva byākaraṇena dve pucchā vissajjesi. idha bhikkhu rāgānusayaṃ vikkhambhetvā paṭhamajjhānaṃ samāpajjati, jhānavikkhambhitaṃ rāgānusayaṃ tathā vikkhambhitameva katvā vipassanaṃ vaddhetvā anāgānimaggaṃa samugghāteti. so anāgānimaggaṃa pahiṇopi tathā vikkhambhitattāva paṭhamajjhāne nānuseti nāma. tenāha — “na tattha rāgānusayo anuseti”ti.

**tadāyatanaṃ taṃ āyatanaṃ, paramassāsabhāvena patitthānabhūtaṃ arahattanti attho.**

**iti anuttaraṃśūti evaṃ anuttarā vimokkhāti laddhanāme arahatte.**

**pihaṃ upaṭṭhāpayatoti paṭṭhanāṃ paṭṭhapentassā.**

not arise with reference to all pleasant feeling. That is the meaning everywhere. 135

“What should be abandoned?” = That is called the question of abandonment.

“Therefore, he abandons lust” = Here she answers two questions with only one answer [the question on anusaya and the the question on abandonment]. Here a bhikkhu having suppressed the underlying tendency to sensual lust, he enters the first jhāna, and having made the suppression in such a way that the anusaya is suppressed in the jhāna, he cultivates insight and abolishes [the anusaya] with the path of non-returning. By the path of non-returning, because of just that abandoning [of the anusaya] in that way [it] is called ‘[the anusaya] is not dormant in the first jhāna’.

Therefore, she said, “the underlying tendency to sensual lust does not lie dormant there [in the first jhāna].”

“That sense sphere” = meaning that sphere of arahatship, established in the condition of supreme confidence.

“With respect to unsurpassed [liberation]” = this so-called ‘unsurpassed deliverance’ of the state of arahathood.

“For one generating aspiration [for purification]” = for one establishing the aspiration [to arahatiship].

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135 The double negative here is complex. It is meant to show that there is a state in which a Bhikkhu has awakened to the truth of the aggregates and is thus no longer a worldling and so cannot be accurately described as one who has not abandoned the anusaya. However, this bhikkhu is not yet completely purified, and therefore they are in a state of not unabandoning, somewhere between being heedless and fully awakened.
Surely Malukyaputta, that wanderers of other faiths will censure and reproach you with the case of the young infant? Indeed Malukyaputta, for a child young in years, for a slow youngster, an infant, they do not have personality-view. Where could personality-view arise in them? Yet, the underlying tendency to personality-view underlies [their experience]. Indeed Malukyaputta, for a child young in years, for a little youngster, an infant, they do not have [a sense of] ‘The Dhamma’. Where could doubt in the Dhamma arise in them? Yet, the underlying tendency to doubt underlies [their experience] ...

[Note: the sequence continues for the remaining of the five lower fetters; *vicikicchā* or doubt, *silabbata-parāmāsa* or attachment to rights and rituals, *kāmacchando* or sensual desire, and *vyāpādo* or ill-will].
Selections from *majjhimaṇṇasa-aṭṭhakathā*, 2. bhikkhuṇga, n n, 4.

mahāmālukyasuttavaṇṇanā

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<tr>
<td>129. evaṃ me sutanti mahāmālukyasuttaṃ.</td>
<td>“Thus have I heard” = The greater discourse to Mālunkyāputta</td>
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<td>Tattha orambhāgiyānīti heṭṭhā koṭṭhāsikāni kāmabhāve nibbattisaṃvattanikāni.</td>
<td>Here in that place “the lower fetters” = the lower parts conducive to rebirth in the sphere of the senses.</td>
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<td>samyojanānīti bandhanānī.</td>
<td>“The fetters” = bonds</td>
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<tr>
<td>kassa kho nāmāti kassa devassa vā manussassa vā desitāni dhāresi, kiṁ tvameveko assosi, na aṁño kocīti?</td>
<td>“Indeed, to whom?” = to which god or man [the fetters] were taught [by me], do you remember one who has heard, is there no other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anusetīti appahīnatāya anuseti. anusayamāno samyojanāṃ nāma hoti.</td>
<td>“It underlies [or lays dormant]” = One lies dormant because of the state of not being abandoned. That which lies dormant is called a fetter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ettha ca bhagavatā samyojanāṃ pucchitaṃ, therenapi samyojanameva byākatam. evaṃ san tepi tassa vāde bhagavatā doso āropito. so kasmātī ce? therassa tathāladdhikattā. ayaṁhi tassa laddhi “samudācārakhaṇeyeva kilesehi samyutto nāma hoti, itarasmiṁ khane asaṃyutto”ti. tenassa bhagavatā doso āropito. athāyasmat ānando cintesi — “bhagavatā bhikkhusaṅghassa dhammaṃ desessāmīti attano dhammatāyeva ayaṁ dhammadesaṇā āraddhā, să iminā apañāṭītena bhikkhunā visamvāditā. handhāṁ bhagavantaṁ yācytā bhikkhunān dhammaṃ desessāmi”ti. so evamakāsi. tam dassetum “evaṁ vutte āyasmat ānando”tiādi vuttaṃ.</td>
<td>And here the Blessed on asked of the fetters, [and] the elder explained the fetters. That being the case also, in his speech a fault was shown by the Blessed One. If so, why is that? Because of the wrong view of the elder. Indeed, this is his view: “What is called ‘bound to afflictions’ in just one moment of behavior is not bound in another moment.” Therefore, a fault of his was revealed by the Blessed One. Then the Venerable Ananda thought, “I will cause the Blessed One to expound the Dhamma to the Bhikkhu Sangha; it is only appropriate for him, having begun this Dhamma exposition, because the teaching was corrupted by an unwise monk. Well then, I will beg the Blessed One to expound the Dhamma to the Bhikkhus.” Then</td>
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he did this. To show that, it was said:
“Venerable Ananda spoke thus...”

Here, “one pervaded by the the arising of personality view” = one is overpowered by grasping the personality view.

“Afflicted by personality view” = [one is] afflicted by personality view.

“Escape” = the giving up of views is called nibbāna; he [the worldling] does not know it [nibbāna, the escape] as it is.

“Not removed” = not driven away, not taken out

“The fetters belonging to the lower world” = are called ‘fetters connected with what is below’. This is just the meaning with reference to the remaining words. The meaning is as clear as the bright fortnight. “Together with the underlying tendency [they are abandoned]” = but from this utterance here some say ‘the fetters are one thing, the dispositions are another’. Just as some say ‘food with its condiments’ are saying that condiments are different from the food. Thus, from the saying ‘...with its underlying tendency...’ underlying tendency should be other than the personality view with which one is possessed. This is their view. They are to be opposed by such statements [as], “Having wrapped himself up to his head; for indeed there is no person different than [his] head. And also, it may be said, “If only that fetter is the underlying tendency, that being so, the simile of the infant which was a censure of the elder was wrongly done. It was not badly used, though. Why? Because they have the wrong
Therefore, it should be understood ‘just that affliction, the fetter which means bondage is the latent disposition with the meaning of non-abandonment’ It is with reference to that meaning that the Blessed One said, '[the view] along with its latent disposition’ is abandoned

### Selections from Majjhima Nikāya, uparipaṇṇāsapāli, 5. saḷāyatanavaggo n n. 6. chachakkasuttaṃ (MN 148)

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<td>425. “cakkhuñca, bhikkhave, paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ và dukkhaṃ và adukkhamasukhaṃ và. so sukhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. tassa rāgānusayo anuseti. dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno socati kilamati paridevati urattāḷiṃ kandati sammohaṃ āpajjati. tassa paṭighānusayo anuseti. adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno tassā vedanāya samudayaṅca atthaṅgamaṅca assādaṅca ādinavaṅca nissaraṅgaṅca yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. tassa avijjānusayo anuseti. so vata, bhikkhave, sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayaṃ appahāya dukkhāya vedanāya paṭighānusayaṃ apparāṭivinodetvā adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya avijjānusayaṃ asamūhanitvā avijjaṃ appahāya vijaṃ anuppādetvā diṭṭheva dhamme dukkhaṃ bhagāvatā bhavissatīti — netaṃ thānaṃ vijjati.</td>
<td>Bhikkhus, dependent the eye and visible form there is the arising of eye-consciousness, the association of these three is contact, with contact as condition there is the arising of either a pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, if one rejoices, welcomes, [and] stays attached to it, then the underlying tendency to lust underlies the person. When one is touched by a painful feeling, when one mourns, is wearied, and cries beating one’s breast, laments and stays confused, then the underlying tendency to aversion underlies. When one is touched by a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, if one does not know clearly as it is in itself, the origin, the setting down, the taste, the disadvantage, [and] the escape from that feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance underlies. Surely Bhikkhus, that one should be able to make an end of suffering not having abandoned the underlying tendency to sensual lust for pleasant feelings, not having dispelled the underlying tendency to aversion</td>
</tr>
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</table>
for painful feelings, not having uprooted the underlying tendency to ignorance regarding neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings, without abandoning ignorance and not having generated wisdom, that this will be the end of suffering in this very world – this is not possible.

Bhikkhus, dependent the eye and visible form there is the arising of eye-consciousness, the association of these three is contact, with contact as condition there is the arising of either a pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, if one does not rejoice, welcome, [and] stay attached to it, then the underlying tendency to lust does not underlie. When one is touched by a painful feeling, if one does not mourn, is not wearied, and does not cry beating one’s breast, does not lament and stays confused, then the underlying tendency to aversion does not underlie. When one is touched by a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, if one knows clearly as it is in itself, the origin, the setting down, the taste, the disadvantage, [and] the escape from that feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance does not underlie. Surely Bhikkhus, that one should be able to make an end of suffering having abandoned the underlying tendency to sensual lust for pleasant feelings, having dispelled the underlying tendency to aversion for painful feelings, having uprooted the underlying tendency to ignorance regarding neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings, having abandoned ignorance and generated wisdom,
one can make an end of suffering in this world – this is possible.

Selections from the Majjhima Nikāya, uparipaṇṇāsa-aṭṭakathā, 5. saḷāyatanavaggo n n, 6. chachakkasuttavaṇṇanā

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāli</th>
<th>English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>425. evaṃ vivaṭṭaṃ dassetvā idāni tiṇṇam anusayānaṃ vasena puna vaṭṭaṃ dassetum cakkhuṇca, bhikkhavetiādimaḥ. tattha abhinandatiṇḍiṇi taṅhādiṭṭhivaseneva vuttāni. anusetiṇī appahino hoti. dukkhassāti vaṭṭadukkhakilesadukkhassa.</td>
<td>Thus, having shown the absence of the round of rebirth [nibbāna] he now says ‘And the eye monks...’ to show how the cycle of rebirth [arises] on account of the three underlying tendencies. In this respect, “He rejoices...” is said only on account of craving and views. “Lies dormant” = is not abandoned. “[End of] suffering” = of the suffering of afflictions, of the suffering of the round. rebirth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 426. evaṃ tiṇṇam anusayānaṃ vasena vaṭṭaṃ kathetvā idāni tesam paṭikkhepavasena vivaṭṭaṃ dassento puna cakkhuṇcātiādimaḥa. avijjam pahāyāti vaṭṭamulikan avijjaṃ pahāyāti. vijjanti arahattamaggavijjaṃ uppādetvā. | Thus having spoken now of the three underlying tendencies, now he explains the absence of the round by negating them [the underlying tendencies]. And he again says “And the eye monks...” “Having abandoned ignorance” = having abandoned the fundamental ignorance of rebirth. ‘Knowing clearly’ = having produced the knowledge of the path to arhatship. |

Translations from the Kathāvatthu

The Kathāvatthu is the fifth book of the Abhidhamma piṭaka of the Pāli Tipiṭaka. It contains a record of debates had by the Theravādin elders and other rival schools whose interpretations of the Sutta material differed from their own. Here I present the relevant sections of three separate
chapters from this text, all of which pertain to *anusaya* and their commentaries. The arguments take place in the form of a series of questions and answers between a Theravādin elder and a representative of a few different Buddhist schools identified by the commentary as Andhakas, Uttarāpathakas, Mahāsanghikas, and Sammitiyas.

**Book IX, Chapter 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pāli</strong></th>
<th><strong>English</strong></th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 554. *anusayā* M..299 V..332 anārammaṇāti? āmantā. *rūpaṃ* P..406 nibbānaṃ cakkhāyatanaṃ ... pe ... phoṭṭhabbāyatananti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe .... | Th: Are underlying tendencies without a sense object?  
Mahāsangika/Sammitiya (M/S): Yes  
Th: Then [*anusayas* are part of either] form, *nibbāna*, the eye, touch or the other sense bases?  
M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.  
Th: Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust lack a sense object?  
M/S: Yes.  
Th: Are sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hinderance of attachment to sensual lust without a sense object?  
M/S: No, surely one should not speak in this way.  
Th: Do sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hinderance of attachment have a sense object?  
M/S: Yes. |

kāmarāgānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā.  
kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyutthānaṃ kāmarāgasanyojanam kāmogho kāmayogo kāmacchandaṇīvaranaṃ anārammaṇanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyutthānaṃ kāmarāgasanyojanam kāmogho kāmayogo kāmacchandaṇīvaranaṃ sārammaṇanti? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo sārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....
kāmarāgānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā. katamakkhandhapariyāpannoti? saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpannoti. saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? āmantā. vedanākkhandho saññākkhandho viññānakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Th: Does the latent bias to sensual lust have a sense object?</th>
<th>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th: Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust lack a sense object?</td>
<td>M/S: Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: In which aggregate is it included?</td>
<td>M/S: It is included in the formations aggregate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the formations aggregate without a sense object?</td>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the formations aggregate without a sense object?</td>
<td>M/S: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Are the feeling, cognition, and consciousness aggregates without sense objects?</td>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak this way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust included in the formations aggregate without a sense object?</td>
<td>M/S: Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is sensual lust included in the formations aggregate without a sense object?</td>
<td>M/S: Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dialogue between M/S and Th.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M/S</th>
<th>Th</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surely one should not speak this way.</strong></td>
<td>Does sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes.</strong></td>
<td>Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surely one should not speak that way.</strong></td>
<td>Does the underlying tendency to sensual lust, included in the formations aggregate lack a sense object, [while] sensual lust included in the formations aggregate have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes.</strong></td>
<td>[So,] a portion of the formations aggregate has a sense object [and] a portion is without a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surely one should not speak that way.</strong></td>
<td>So, a portion of the formations aggregate has a sensual object and a portion does not have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes.</strong></td>
<td>Do the feeling, cognition, and consciousness aggregates have a sense object in a portion and lack a sense object in [another] portion?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
555. patighānusayo V..333 mānānusayo ditṭhānusayo vicikicchānusayo bhavarāgānusayo avijjānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā. avijjā avijjogo avijjāyogo avijjānusayo avijjāpariyutṭhānam avijjasamyojanam M..300 avijjānivaranam anārammaṇanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... avijjā T..437 avijjogo ... pe ... avijjānivaranam sārammaṇanti? āmantā. avijjānusayo sārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

avijjānusayo anārammaṇoti? āmantā. katamakkhandhapariyāpanno? saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno? saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... saṅkhārakkhandho anārammaṇoti? āmantā. vedanākkhandho saṅnākkhandho viññānakkhandho anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

avijjānusayo saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇoti? āmantā. avijjā P..408 saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇathi? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... avijjā saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇathi? āmantā. avijjānusayo saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

avijjānusayo saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno anārammaṇo, avijjā saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno sārammaṇāti? āmantā. saṅkhārakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... saṅkhārakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇoti? āmantā. vedanākkhandho saṅnākkhandho viññānakkhandho ekadeso sārammaṇo ekadeso anārammaṇoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

[Note: The questioning is now reversed]

M/S: [You say that] It should not be spoken: ‘underlying tendencies are without sense objects?’

Th: Yes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vattabotī? āmantā. atthi tassa rāgassa ārammaṇanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe .... tena hi rāgo anārammaṇoti.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Should it be said of a worldling that ‘they have an underlying tendency’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: That being the case with respect to underlying tendencies, do they have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Surely one would not speak this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Because of this, underlying tendencies are without sense objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Note: Again the question switches here]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Should it be said of a worldling that they are ‘lustful’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Then does lust have a sense object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Therefore, lust does not have a sense object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Note: this latter conclusion, which the Th attributes to the M/S is assumed to be absurd by both of them and thus functions as a reductio of the M/S position]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tissa's Anusaya Kathā (Kv 11.1) “Three talks on anusaya”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāli</th>
<th>English</th>
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</table>
| 605. anusayā P..444 V..360 abyākatī? āmantā. vipākābyākatā kiriyābyākatā rūpaṃ nibbānaṃ ca cakhāyatanamī pe pe phoṭṭhabbāyatanantī na hevaṃ vattabbe pe pe .... | Th: Are underlying tendencies [morally] indeterminate?  
M/S: Yes  
Th: Then [anusayas are part of either] indeterminate frutions, indeterminate deeds, like form, nibbāna, the eye sense base or the other sense bases?  
M/S: Surely one should not speak that way. |
| kāmarāgānusayo abyākatoti? āmantā. kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānaṃ kāmarāgasamyojanaṃ kāmogho kāmayogo kāmacchandanivaraṇamī abyākatanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe pe pe kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānaṃ pe pe kāmacchandanivaraṇamī akusalanti? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo akusaloti? na hevaṃ vattabbe | Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust [morally] indeterminate?  
M/S: Yes  
Th: Are sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hindrance of attachment interdeterminate?  
M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.  
Th: ...as before...are sensual lust and its other determinants non-virtuous?  
M/S: Yes  
Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust non-virtuous |
606. na vattabbā — “anusaya abyākatā”ti? āmantā. puthujjano kusalābyākate citte vattamāne “sānusayo”ti vattabboti? āmantā. kusalākusala dhammā sammukhībhāvaṃ āgacchantīti? na hevaṃ vattabb ... pe ... tena hi anusayā abyākatāti. puthujjano kusalābyākate citte vattamāne “sarāgo”ti vattabboti? āmantā. kusalākusala dhammā sammukhībhāvaṃ āgacchantīti? na hevaṃ vattabb ... pe ... tena hi rāgo abyākatotī.

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way...the same should be said of the other underlying tendencies.

[Note: this sequence of questioning then repeats for the other underlying tendencies]

M/S: [So, you claim that] it should not be spoken thus: ‘underlying tendencies are [morally] indeterminate’?

Th: Yes

M/S: Should it be said that worlding ‘has underlying tendencies’ when in the mind they have turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

Th: Yes

M/S: Does this come to [the view] that virtuous and nonvirtuous dhammas can be in presence of each other?

Th: Surely one should not speak in that way.

M/S: Because of this, underlying tendencies are indeterminate.

Th: Should it be said that a worlding ‘has lust’ when in the mind they are turned toward that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

M/S: Yes

Th: Does this come to [the view] that virtuous
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>607.</td>
<td>anusayā M..325 āhetukāti? āmantā. rūpaṃ nibbānaṃ cakkhāyatanaṃ ... pe ... phoṭṭhabbāyatanaṃ? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kāmarāgānusayo ahetukoti? āmantā. kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyutṭhānaṃ kāmarāgasāmyojanaṃ kāmacchandanīvaraṇaṃ ahetukanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... kāmarāgo kāmarāgapariyutṭhānaṃ ... pe ... kāmacchandanīvaraṇaṃ sahetukanti? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo sahetukoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... patighānusayo ... pe ... mānānusayo... diṭṭhānusayo... vicikīchānusayo... bhavarāgānusayo... avijjānusayo ahetukoti? āmantā. avijjā avijjāyogo avijjāyago avijjāpariyutṭhānaṃ avijjāsāmyojanaṃ avijjānīvaraṇaṃ ahetukanti V..362? na hevaṃ vattabbe T..477 ... pe ... avijjā P..447 avijjāyogo ... pe ... avijjānīvaraṇaṃ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and non-virtuous <em>dhammas</em> can be in the presence of each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Surely one should not speak this way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th:</td>
<td>Because of this lust is indeterminate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th: Are underlying tendencies without root-condition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th:</td>
<td>[Are underlying tendencies to be identified with] form, <em>nibbāna</em>, the eye sense base...ther other sense bases like the touch sense base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th:</td>
<td>Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust without a root condition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th:</td>
<td>Are sensual lust, its outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hinderance of attachment without a root condition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Surely one should not speak this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th:</td>
<td>Do sensual lust, it’s outburst, fetter, flood, bond, hinderance of attachment have a root condition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This sequence then repeats for the other underlying tendencies.

M/S: [So, according to you] it should not be spoken thus: ‘Underlying tendencies are without root condition?’

Th: Yes

M/S: Should it be said that a worldlyling ‘has underlying tendencies’ when in the mind they are turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

Th: Yes

M/S: So, underlying tendencies have a root condition because of a root condition?

Th: Surely one should not speak this way.

M/S: Therefore, underlying tendencies do not have a root condition.

Th: Should it be said of a worldlyling is ‘with lust’ when in his mind he is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

M/S: Yes [Note: the compilers are being profoundly uncharitable to the non-Theravādin position here. A consistent proponent of the opposing view would never answer in the
Th: Therefore, the passion because of a root condition is accompanied by a cause?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: Therefore, passion is without a cause.

Th: Are there underlying tendencies separate from citta [Note: it is unclear what the scope of reference is for citta here. It could mean ‘mind’, ‘consciousness’, ‘thought’. I will translate cittavippayutta as ‘dissociated from thought’ to render the non-Theravādin position as coherent as possible.]

M/S: Yes

Th: Then [anusayas] are like form, nibbāna, the eye, touch or the other sense bases [dissociated from thought]?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust dissociated from thought?

M/S: Yes

Th: Are sensual lust, its outburst, flood, bond, hinderance of attachment dissociated from thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: [So] are sensual lust, its outburst, flood,
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kāmarāgānusayo cittavippayuttoti? āmantā. katamakkhandhapariyāpannoti?</td>
<td>M/S: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpannoti.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>saṅkhārakkhandho P..448 cittavippayuttoti? na M..326 hevaṃ vattabbe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saṅkhārakkhandho cittavippayuttoti? āmantā. vedanākkhandho</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saṅnakkhandho cittavippayuttoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>bond, hinderance of attachment associated with thought?</td>
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<tr>
<td>M/S: Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust connected to the mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust dissociated from thought?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Which of the aggregates does it [the underlying tendency] belong to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: It belongs to the formations aggregate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the formations aggregate dissociated from thought?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is the formations aggregate dissociated from thought?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Are the feeling and cognition aggregates dissociated from thought?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
kāmarāgānusayo
saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno
cittavippayutti? āmantā. kāmarāgo
saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno
cittavippayutti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...
kāmarāgo saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno
cittasampayuttoti? āmantā. kāmarāgānusayo
saṅkhārakkhandhapariyāpanno
cittasampayutti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust belonging to the formations aggregate dissociated from thought?

M/S: Yes

Th: Is sensual lust belonging to the formations aggregate dissociated from thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

Th: Is sensual lust belonging to the formations aggregate associated with thought?

M/S: Yes

Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust belonging to the formations aggregate associated with thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak in that way.

Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust belonging to the formations aggregate dissociated from the mind [while] sensual lust included in the formations aggregate is associated with thought?

M/S: Yes

Th: Is a portion of the formations aggregate connected associated with thought and a portion not associated with thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.
saṅkhārakkhandho ekadeso cittasampayutto
ekadeso cittavippayuttoti? āmantā.
vedanākkhandho saññākkhandho ekadeso
cittasampayutto ekadeso cittavippayuttoti? na
hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....

613. na vattabbaṃ — “anusayā
cittavippayuttā”ti? āmantā. puthuijano
kusalābyākate citte vattamāne “sānusayo”ti
vattabboti? āmantā. anusayā tena cittena
sampayuttāti? na hevaṃ vattabbe. tena hi
anusayā cittavippayuttāti. puthuijano
kusalābyākate citte vattamāne “sarāgo”ti
vattabboti? āmantā. rāgo tena cittena
sampayuttoti? na hevaṃ vattabbe. tena hi rāgo
cittavippayuttoti.

Th: The formations aggregate is partially
associated with thought and partially
dissociated with thought?

M/S: Yes

Th: [And] the feeling and cognition aggregates
are partially associated with thought and
partially dissociated with thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way.

[This sequence repeats for the other anusayas]

M/S: [So, according to you] it should not be
said that: ‘the underlying tendencies are
dissociated from thought’?

Th: Yes

M/S: Should it be said of a worlding that they
‘have underlying tendencies’ when they turn
their mind to that which is indeterminate with
respect to virtue?

Th: Yes.

M/S: Therefore, underlying tendencies are
associated with thought?

Th: Surely one should not speak that way.

M/S: Then underlying tendencies are
dissociated from thought.
Th: Should it be said of a worlding that they are ‘with lust’ when they turn their mind towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

M/S: Yes [Note again this is not the consistent answer for the anti-Theravādin to take].

Th: Is lust associated with thought?

M/S: Surely one should not speak that way

Th: Therefore, lust is dissociated from thought.

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Book XIV, Chapter 5

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T..530? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... sveva kāmarāgo taṃ kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānanti? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ....</td>
<td>Th: Is the underlying tendency to sensual lust one thing and the outburst of sensual lust another?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700. aṇña kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānanti? āmantā. aṇṇo kāmarāgo aṇṇaṃ kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānanti T..530? na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... sveva kāmarāgo taṃ kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānanti? āmantā. sveva kāmarāgānusayo taṃ kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhānanti?</td>
<td>A: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is sensual lust one thing and the outburst of sensual desire another?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Surely one should not speak that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: So that very sensual lust is the outburst of sensual lust?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Yes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th: Is that very underlying tendency to sensual lust that outburst of sensual lust?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A: Surely one should not speak that way.

[This sequence repeats for the other anusayas]

A: [So according to you] it should not be said ‘The underlying tendency is one thing, the outburst another’?

Th: Yes.

A: Should it be said of a worlding that they ‘have underlying tendencies’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

Th: Yes.

A: Can they [the worlding] be said to be ‘pervaded by the outburst’?

Th: Surely one should not speak that way.

A: Therefore, the underlying tendency is one thing, the outburst is another.

Th: Should it be said of a worlding that they are ‘with lust’ when their mind is turned towards that which is indeterminate with respect to virtue?

A: Yes.

Th: Should they [the worlding] be said to be pervaded by it?

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A: Surely one should not speak this way.

Th: Therefore, sensual lust is one thing, it's outburst is another.
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